Entrepreneurship for DOCTORS

How to Build Your Own Successful Medical Practice

DR. SURESH K. PANDEY

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Dedicated to

All Doctors, Healthcare Professionals who Fought the War against COVID-19 Global Pandemic

In the fight against the COVID-19 global pandemic, the under-resourced, sleep-deprived heroes - doctors and health care professionals worked day and night to save the patients. The brave medical army stands strong with masks, sanitizers, thermometers, personal protection equipment, stethoscopes, oxygen, medications, monitors, and ventilators as their weapons. Medical researchers are working around the clock against all odds in the hope of the antidote for the disease.

Foreword

Dr. Richard L. Lindstrom, MD

The challenges inherent in founding, growing or simply sustaining a successful medical practice are significant. This past year these challenges have been magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, most young doctors who finish medical training join an established medical practice, but a select few still create their own personal private medical practice. The challenges of transitioning from a trainee to a trusted and productive member of an already established medical practice and the medical, ophthalmic and broader community as a whole are not trivial.

Creating, growing and sustaining a medical practice requires careful planning and the application of sound business practices. As an individual's responsibility in a practice grows, it also requires the exercise of leadership. The skills required for practice management and the exercise of leadership are seldom taught in medical school or during specialty training. They include the careful construction of a Business Plan that should include the practice Mission, Vision and Core Values. This Business Plan should extend for at least five and preferably 10 years. It must be upgraded and extended at least once a year as the internal and external practice environment evolves. I also encourage those I mentor to create a Personal Plan with similar core elements in consultation with their families. Even the seasoned Managing Partner of a well-established practice needs guidance and continuous support.

Dr. Suresh K. Pandey, a seasoned veteran with decades of practice management experience, has recognized this need and created a comprehensive guide in his book : *Entrepreneurship for Doctors: How to Build Your Own Successful Medical Practice.* In this book, the reader will find valuable information that will allow them to make good practice and personal decisions with confidence. This book is a valuable source for the seasoned practice leader, a mid-career professional being asked to assume

increased practice management responsibility, as well as the trainee looking at their first practice. It is a book that will be consulted frequently as we all attempt to create a balanced joyful personal life while serving our communities with a successful sustainable medical practice.

- Dr. Richard L. Lindstrom, MD

Founder and Attending Surgeon,

Minnesota Eye Consultants, MN, USA,

Board of Directors, Unifeye Vision Partners, Dallas, Texas, USA,

Adjunct Professor Emeritus, University of Minnesota Department of Ophthalmology, Minnesota, MN, USA,

Visiting professor, UC Irvine Gavin Herbert Eye Institute,Irvine, CA, USA,

Global Medical Editor: Ocular Surgery News, USA.

Padma Shri Professor (Dr.) Amod Gupta

Very often the doctors and other medical personnel make a major difference between life and death. Never before in the history has the role of doctors and health care workers been in so much limelight as in the present times of the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic. Ask someone who survived a major accident, how the doctors were able to save him/her by offering immediate treatment. There are countless such stories of how health care workers saved the lives or transformed the lives of their patients. Healing the unwell not only requires the skills of a doctor but they need to approach their patients with care, compassion, competence and commitment.

Entrepreneurship for Doctors: How to Build Your Own Successful Medical Practice? is an excellent treatise written by one of my former students, Dr. Suresh K. Pandey, who has shared a road-map to build an ethical medical practice. The right diagnosis and treatment can only be reached through effective communication between the patient and the doctor. If the doctors fail to listen to the problems of their patient, or fail to diagnose or unable to intervene timely, it can result in grave health consequences for the patient. When patients feel they are being heard, they can form a positive and strong connection with their physician. This enables the doctors to heal them quickly. The patient-physician relationship plays a major role in the process of healing.

We need doctors, who are not just skilled at what they do, but who also have empathy and compassion for their patients. This is what aspiring doctors and health professionals must keep in mind. While there is an urgent need to instill these values in the doctors-in training, unfortunately not much attention is paid in the curriculum of the medical courses. Moreover, having graduated and not finding any remunerative job openings, they suddenly find themselves at a dead end. The only option they have is to start on their own. However, no medical school in the world prepares them to start their own medical practice. There are a million questions in their mind how to go about

setting up an ethical yet remunerative practice. Dr Suresh K. Pandey, himself a highly successful medical entrepreneur with decades of experience shares in this unique resource secrets of setting up a successful medical practice. This is a must-read book for all the new and not-so-new medical graduates who ever dream of setting up their own practice.

- Professor (Dr.) Amod Gupta (Awarded Padma Shri by the President of India)

Professor Emeritus Ophthalmology, Former Dean, Former Chief

Advanced Eye Centre, Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER),

Chandigarh, India.

Padma Shri Professor (Dr.) Gullapalli N. Rao

Health care is one of the most essential requirements for the prosperity of any nation and physicians (doctors) are expected to provide leadership in this field. Several factors go into the making of a “Doctor”. I believe that an optimal balance of **Hand** (dexterity as in surgical techniques), **Head** (knowledge of the disease, diagnosis and treatment) and **Heart** (right degree of empathy for the suffering of the individual seeking care) is fundamental to making a doctor.

While knowledge and dexterity may be taken over in varying degree by technological tools, the “Caring” will remain with the physicians.
I feel that the success of a doctor in future depends upon how “Caring” that person is. The **Affability, Availability** and only then **Ability** become integral requirements for success in medical practice.

We are also in a uniquely privileged situation as our profession offers the best opportunity to combine “doing well” with “doing good”. How well one can combine this becomes an index of the success as an entrepreneur. Those who can succeed in balancing the two can contribute towards creating a positive image for the profession as true healers, and clearing the clouds of the negative image of the profession as only “money minded”. True entrepreneurship is in building a positive image and in regaining the lost respect for our profession. I end with this popular adage “Go out into the world and do well, but more importantly, go out into the world and do good”.

I *congratulate* Dr. Suresh K Pandey for undertaking this important project – *Entrepreneurship for Doctors: How to Build Your Own Successful Medical Practice?* The book has important details on diverse topics, which are not covered in the medical college curriculum, and provides a roadmap for doctors.

- Padma Shri Professor (Dr.) Gullapalli N. Rao

Dip. American Boards, FACS, FRCS, FNAMS, DSc, MD

Founder-Chair, L. V. Prasad Eye Institute, Hyderabad, India

Padma Shri Dr. V. Mohan

Doctors serve as the backbone of any society as we all have witnessed during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic era. Unfortunately, the doctor-patient relationship which was very sacred in the past, is radically changing. Meanwhile, the medical field has also been transforming itself with modernization and use of technology. Doctors and health care professionals ensure that people are healthy and strong so that they can make a meaningful contribution to the progress of the country. Doctors also play a major role in building up a positive image of the nation as a whole. The healthier the people are, the stronger is the nation. Doctors, therefore, carry a huge responsibility on their shoulders.

Medical entrepreneurship is rarely taught in the medical college curriculum. Hence, most young doctors find it difficult to start an ethical, yet profitable medical practice. With rising concerns over the problems faced by an overburdened public health care system the role of medical entrepreneurship in developing an affordable private health system which offers excellent quality and yet is within the reach of most people is becoming a necessity. Like any other entrepreneur, a medical entrepreneur also faces many problems in establishing an institution. These include financial, technical and bureaucratic hurdles. Abiding by Corporate and Government regulation and competition from giant health corporations are among other challenges faced by them.

I congratulate Dr. Suresh K. Pandey for writing this excellent book - *Entrepreneurship for Doctors: How to Build Your Own Successful Medical Practice?* The author shares valuable pearls of wisdom to establish an ethical medical practice in this book. Dr. Pandey also elaborates several important points how to start and establish medical practice, how to enhance patient satisfaction, how to build a brand and how to minimize medical errors by following the checklist system.

I am sure this book will be extremely helpful to all young doctors and entrepreneurs who want to start a medical practice, clinic or hospital and I wish Dr. Suresh K. Pandey all success.

- Padma Shri Dr. V. Mohan

Chairman and Chief of Diabetology,

Dr. Mohan’s Diabetes Specialities Centre,

Chennai, India.

Preface

The practice of medicine is one of the oldest professions in the history of mankind. However, like all other fields, the medical field has also seen tremendous change in the last century. Yet, at the very core, medicine is not just a science but an art as well. The best of technologies cannot downplay the role of care, compassion, comfort and communication. With rapid advances in medical science, we have been able to control many dreaded diseases and find newer treatments that have resulted in a much longer life expectancy than the earlier decades. At the same time, this has also resulted in higher expectations of medical science. With increasingly expensive health care, we have now reached a stage where patients find it difficult to accept the adverse outcome.

What are the qualities of a successful medical practitioner? A successful medical practitioner is one who is attentive, analytical, brave, calm, cooperative, creative, decisive, energetic, ethical, friendly, gracious, humorous, investigative, knowledgeable, mature, nurturing, observant, passionate, responsible, reassuring, selfless, skillful, trustworthy, vigilant and wise. Being a doctor, an important part of the healthcare profession, still remains one of the noblest and gratifying duty to perform. Despite rising overhead costs, decreasing reimbursements, increasing debt of young doctors, and working long hours, more and more medical aspirants appear for the medical colleges' entrance examinations in record numbers. Medical colleges in India produces the largest number of allopathic doctors in the world. Unfortunately, most of medical students and doctors are not taught or prepared for entrepreneurship in the field of medicine while pursuing medical training.

Most of doctors after completing specialization or super-specialization are unable to find a suitable job to optimally utilize their clinico-surgical skills. For them setting a medical practice remains one of the important option. Setting up the medical practice is challenging yet an incredibly rewarding endeavor and a goal that many young doctors aim for after completing the training. It's also one of the most challenging tasks you'll face as a practitioner ranging from business logistics to financial planning. Indeed, starting your medical practice is not an easy task. From securing finances, finding the right location for purchasing equipment and marketing and image

building of your medical practice – there is a lot that has to be done. It can become overwhelming, especially if you don't have a business background. No matter how outstanding a medical practitioner you are, some leadership, as well as business skills, are required to run your individual medical practice successfully. Fortunately, these are the skills that you can learn and even seek help on.

Just as with any other business, your medical practice business must initiate with the planning stage. Determining what you want, what you need, and achieving it are the first things you have to figure out. Though it requires plenty of work, it is equally rewarding. It not only generates financial rewards but also offers you unique opportunities to grow professionally and personally. It is always best to work at a medical institution to determine the demands, efforts and tactics required to run a medical practice. You must keep in mind that starting and establishing your own medical practice will take time. You must be patient and avoid making hasty decisions as this could lead to mistakes and losses. Furthermore, you would also be required to seek expert help from successful practitioners, financial advisors, business consultants, real estate agents, architects, lawyers and more. They would be able to give you expert advice on how to effectively move forward in the right direction while at the same protecting yourself, your business, your staff and your patients.

COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted the importance of hygiene, health, hospitals, healthcare practitioner, and health budget. With the COVID-19 contagion raging *across the country, India's public health sector has been pushed to firefight an unprecedented health crisis.* The COVID-19 outbreak has pushed India's healthcare sector into intensive care unit (ICU). Infrastructural inadequacies, shortage of human resources, lack of adequate funding and huge interstate and inter-regional variations in the availability of health services have been the major impediments in India's COVID-19-containment strategy. In developing countries like India, a sub-optimal doctor-population ratio (the doctor-population ratio in India is 1:1456 against the WHO recommendation of 1:1000) and the general awareness about health and diseases is low in villages where the country's 70 percent population resides. The health facilities at the Govt.-run hospitals are grossly inadequate for our huge population and these Govt.-run hospitals may not provide recent/cutting-edge technologies. The total net government spending on healthcare was $ 36 billion or 1.23 % of its GDP in 2019-20. In 2021, the

public spend in healthcare needs to increase from the current 1.2 percent to at least 2.5 percent of GDP in the next 3 years due to challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic. Corporate health care facilities available in the metro-cities of country may be expensive for general public without any medical insurance cover. In such a scenario, the medical facilities are largely provided by private doctors and private nursing homes and the private sector consists of 58% of the hospitals in the country, 29% of beds in hospitals, and 81% of doctors. However, the increasing costs of healthcare services, communication gap between doctors and patients, and almost provocative media coverage has caused a lot of mistrust in the general population against doctors. In this background, doctors find it difficult to run their individual medical practice, satisfy their patients, avoid trouble and also lead happy lives themselves.

In recent years, the doctor-patient relationship has come under a lot of strain all over the world. Part of it is due to a generalized sociocultural change, with more consumerism, increasing expectations from medical professionals and an inability to accept adverse outcomes. Of course, there are many problems and potential solutions related to the way we deal with patients, but a major problem is that of “trust.” The trust between a doctor and a patient is sacred and should remain so. Many senior doctors and health professionals in the past enjoyed the complete faith and trust of all their patients. While it may be difficult to maintain that kind of trust in today’s ever-changing society with big faceless hospitals and increasingly expensive health care, yet all of us, including the doctors and patients should do the best we can to keep this trust as trust is the foundation that is vital for the success of any medical intervention.

Taking the first step towards an independent medical practice is overcoming the uncertainties. It will enable you to enhance your experience, your goals and change your lifestyle. To tackle your fear and hesitation, knowledge, planning and execution are all you need. Once you understand each step and are aware of the things you need to do, you would smoothly handle the entire process.

Why This Book?

Entrepreneurship for Doctors: How to Build Your Own Successful Medical Practice? is a book written with the sole purpose of offering guidance to aspiring private practitioners. For doctors, things can get quite difficult when they have to keep up with the demands of health care organizations and

struggle with maintaining an appropriate work-life balance. Amidst such, private medical practice can be a real relief where you can plan your own schedule and retain more control over your professional life and growth. However, taking the decision to do so may not be as easy especially when you do not have adequate guidance.

The book was written to serve as an ultimate guide to help you start and build your own successful medical practice. It will help you to take the leap from your employment to starting your own practice successfully. This book intends to help you make a strong and stable start of private medical practice so that you can tackle the initial challenges efficiently and ensure to have a soaring journey ahead.

Tapping the managerial, legal and financial aspects, this book offers in-depth guidance pertaining to starting and maintaining a well-organized and secure medical practice. From marketing strategies to financial, ethical considerations and disaster management, you will be able to find direction for all sorts of challenges and phases. When you start a private medical practice, the horizon of your job description expands tremendously. You no longer have to stay confined with your medical skills, but you have to take the role of a manager and an entrepreneur too. You have to look after legal matters and deal with financial aspects consistently.

The crucial aspects like regulation of clinical supplies, ensuring smooth workflow and managing human resources will become completely chaotic if you do not take the right path from day one. So, if it’s your day one or even if you are already running a medical practice, this book can be an important guide for you to ensure success and smooth sailing.

Starting your own medical practice is an exciting way to take the practice of medicine into your own hands. Unfortunately, it is also complicated and challenging. To ensure success, it’s critical to have a clear and detailed plan at the outset itself so that the things can work out as per the schedule.

Today, the world is going through an extremely uncertain period due to the raging global COVID-19 pandemic. It has upended society as we know it and has overwhelmed hospitals. Doctors are on the front line against this dreaded disease and they are trying their level best to stem the time and push back against this terrible virus. The need of the hour is to have greater medical resources, hospitals, clinics and private practices that can help to take care of the maximum number of patients in these dark times. Doctors need to be

prepared with the right equipment and protection apparatus to ensure that the virus is held at bay.

Entrepreneurship for Doctors: How to Build Your Own Successful Medical Practice? is aimed at doctors and health professionals to share tips and a road-map towards the journey of medical entrepreneurship. The author has shared pearls for handling various problems which are faced by the doctors today. If you are considering opening your own medical practice after working as a doctor/medical specialist in a clinic or hospital, then why not? You have the qualification and experience. However, you are hesitant to begin as you don't know how and where to start. You aren't sure whether you have what it takes to own your own practice.

So, turn the page now and begin your journey of owning and running your own medical practice in a post-COVID-19 world.

Dr. Suresh K. Pandey
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Acknowledgments

The herculean task of writing and compiling a book of such a magnitude is not possible without the help of several people. I take this opportunity to thank all the people who have been the pillars of strength behind the creation of this book.

To start with, I would like to acknowledge the valuable assistance and contribution of my wife, Dr. Vidushi Sharma. I offer deep gratitude also to my adorable daughter, Ishita, who thoroughly understands her Papa’s passion for writing and held on even when I was away for the past few weeks for this project.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to Prof. Richard L. Lindstrom, Padma Shri Prof. Amod Gupta, Padma Shri Prof. Gullapalli N. Rao and Padma Shri Dr. V. Mohan for writing the forewords in this book. I would like to thank the doctors and staff-members of SuVi Eye Institute & Lasik Laser Center, Kota — Dr. Nipun Bagrecha, Dr. Monika Nagar, and Dr. S. K. Gupta for their assistance. Special thanks to Dr. Abhishek R. Kothari for his inputs in suggesting the title of the book.

Last but not the least, I am indebted to the Pblishing team (Maple Press), all medical aspirants, medical students, my patients and my friends and well-wishers who share my dreams and motivate me to do better in the future.

- Dr. Suresh K. Pandey

Part I
Getting Started

Chapter 1:
Finding the Purpose of Your Medical Practice

"An organization's culture of purpose answers the critical questions of who it is and why it exists. They have a culture of a purpose beyond making a profit."

- Punit Renjen, CEO, Deloitte

Establishing and managing your own medical practice can be harder than you think. It takes continuous hard work, time and patience to ensure that your own medical practice thrives. There is so much to do in such less time! Ever wonder what keeps those medical practitioners going even after struggling so much? What keeps them motivated even when their business is struggling? It is the purpose.

Just like any other business, private medical practice also require a purpose. It works as a foundation on which you can build your entire practice. After completing my ophthalmology residency from Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh, I have opportunity to get further training at Storm Eye Institute, Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston, SC, USA, John A. Moran Eye Center, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA and Sydney Eye Hospital, Save Sight Institute, University of Sydney, Australia. My spouse, Dr. Vidushi Sharma completed MD Ophthalmology from All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi and completed advanced training in oculoplastic surgery from Sydney Eye Hospital, Sydney, Australia. It was a really difficult decision for both of us to return to India and start an ophthalmology practice from scratch in a non-metro city of India. This challenging journey of medical entrepreneurship became easy after finding a purpose that was to carry out our passion to regain the vision of blind/visually impaired population using the cutting-edge technology. We both took very difficult decision to establish SuVi (Su: ***Su****resh; Vi:* ***Vi****dushi) Eye Hospital & Lasik Laser Center at Kota (Rajasthan) with mission statement of Competent Eye Care with Compassion on February 5, 2006. Our purpose to provide the "Vision" to all needy*

patients kept us going in difficult situation during our transition from working overseas to non metro city in India.

Why do You Want to Start Your Own Medical Practice?

When you run your own medical practice (or work within an independent practice), you are much freer to practice medicine in the way you deem most beneficial to patients. As part of a large healthcare organization, you become a cog in a wheel - subject to someone else's schedule, policies, and procedures. As a private practitioner, you have greater say in how to handle patient disputes, the type of environment you want to create, how your office is staffed, and much more. Increased doctors autonomy results in happier healthcare professionals and patients... a win-win situation.

Indeed, more and more young doctors are attracted to start the private practices as it offer more health care providers get the chance to practice a greater degree of control as well as acquire the freedom to run their practice as per their desire. Moreover, private practices are also beneficial for smaller communities as they find them less expensive and more accommodating. Being your own boss is another major reason why medical practitioners opt for starting their own practice. Therefore, this is one of the most important questions you need to ask yourself before you start planning for your own practice.

The purpose of business matters as it works as a pathway which shows you the direction towards your ultimate dream. When you are sure of the reason why you want to do, what you want to do, it will create a sense of excitement, ownership and commitment towards your purpose. The main reason to initiate your own practice is because you are passionate about a cause and ultimately your job will excite you. Majority of individuals love starting a business that revolves around something they deeply care about. Of course, you love your medical practice and want to provide high-quality health care to people. But you need to be more specific. Determine what is it that you love about your job, think about why you want to help people and how exactly are you going to help them. Moreover, what would you offer in your practice that isn't being offered elsewhere? Why would people come to your practice?

It is of course important to be passionate about what you are doing. Passion works as a motivating factor - it fuels your purpose and keeps you going no matter how many problems come your way. However, without a solid

purpose, your passion won't have a direction or pathway through which it can form into a successful plan. With a purpose, you would have the basis to create plans, strategies and goals accordingly. It will also help you in planning for any potential obstacles that might come your way while establishing your practice. Your purpose helps you get there.

Therefore, determine what is it that you want and what are you aiming to achieve by establishing your own medical practice.

Making Core Values

Once you have determined the main purpose behind establishing your own practice, it is essential for you to create a set of core values upon which your practice will be built. These core values will help you in staying in the right direction and will prevent you from getting sidetracked from your goals. These values will not just help you in staying in the right direction but also will enable your entire medical staff to follow the right direction and utilize the right strategies and tactics that align with your core values.

To help you create sound core values, here are eight easy steps:

Step 1: Determine your Commitment

Building a strong foundation for your medical practice will take time. This time must not be viewed as time wasted. It is essential that you look at it as an investment that will bring in long-term benefits. It is essential that you are committed to the cause. Not just committed towards successfully establishing your medical practice but also successfully running and maintaining it. Moreover, the entire team of staff you would eventually hire for your practice must also be committed towards maintaining the purpose, vision and core values of this practice.

Step 2: Identifying your Personal Values

Your personal values are the ways in which you work and live your life. These might be harder than you think since this is something barely anyone ever thinks about. Your personal values determine things that are important to you. These can be defined as the assessment tool through which you evaluate your life and whether it is going the way you want it to. Once you identify your personal values, it would be easy to figure out what is important to you and how would you want to run your business based on these values. These values will help you in making the right decisions and plans for your individual medical practice. The best way to determine your personal values

is by examining your life. Determine the things that made you happy and confident while you were making decisions, the times when you were extremely proud of your professional and personal choices and the times when you were most satisfied.

Evaluating the experiences in your past will help you in figuring out your personal values.

Step 3: Personal Values of the Key Players of your Practice

Think about the main individuals who are or would be involved in your individual practice. They can be either your partner, your business associates, other doctors, and your staff. Determine what their personal values are. Also, think about your patients. What would their personal values be? If there are already major players that are involved with you, then you can even ask them about their values and the kind of organization they would want to be associated with.

It is essential to keep in mind that the core values of a business are not just about the owner. They are also about the key players involved. These values help in forming the culture of the organization. Therefore, it is integral to determine the values of other major players when it comes to creating core values.

Step 4: Start Writing them Down

Once you have identified your personal values as well as key players' personal values, you need to note them down in one place. Highlight the ones that you believe are most important and will be beneficial for your practice.

This would be your first draft.

Step 5: Test These Values

With your first draft prepared, the next thing you need to do is to start testing those values. Once you initiate your plan, you would have to implement these values against the individuals already involved in your practice. Even if you don't have a staff yet, determine what would be the key qualities of your employees. Compare those qualities with the core values you have drafted. Do you think your employees would resonate with those core values? Is there a need to make changes in the core values that you have listed?

This is an essential step as it will help you in having a nuanced perspective of your values. Also, it will aid you in enhancing the drafted core values and

finalizing them.

Step 6: Comparing your Core Values with your Commitment

Now you need to evaluate the level of your commitment against your own core values. Ask yourself if you would be willing to hire or even fire employees even if they are adding value to your practice on the basis of whether they would be able to follow and fit the core values which you have listed. The commitment part won't be easy since your core values would affect your recruitment process and you might have to make a decision of not hiring an applicant who could be a valuable asset but doesn't fit your core values.

It will be challenging, but your core values will be the base upon which you will do everything, including your decisions and your plans. So think carefully before you finalize your core values.

Step 7: Make Amendments

By this step, you might have highlighted a few core values from your draft that you would want to discard and add a few new ones. Share the core values with the major players of your practice and ask them for their valuable feedback.

Refine, alter, reject and add core values once again after receiving feedback. Make the final draft with the list of all the core values you want for your practice.

Step 8: Implement and Follow

Now that you have the final version of your core values, implement them in your practice. Ensure that all the decisions and choices made are based on the core values. Everything you do in your practice, your core values must be an integral element.

According to Tony Hsieh, CEO, Zappos:

"We developed a list of committable core values…not just values that end up being part of a meaningless plaque on the wall. These core values guide us in everything we do today."

Your core values aren't just to pass around and hang on the walls of your individual practice. These must be taken seriously and each and every employee must follow these values.

Take-Home Message

➢ The purpose of any medical practice is extremely important. It is a pathway that leads you towards your ultimate dream.

➢ With a purpose, you will have the basis to create plans, strategies and goals accordingly.

➢ The first step should be determining the main reason behind starting your own practice.

➢ Identify the major things you love about your job, how it helps people and how can you improve it.

➢ Figure out the services you want to provide in your practice. Out of these services, which of your services are different from other clinics? Why would people come to your practice?

➢ Creating core values is also crucial as they help you in staying in the right direction and preventing you from getting sidetracked from your goals.

Chapter 2:
Identifying Your Unique Selling Point (USP)

"Our job is to connect to people, to interact with them in a way that leaves them better than we found them, more able to get where they'd like to go."

-Seth Godin

The way to differentiate your practice or your brand begins with USP. USP is the Unique Selling Proposition or Unique Selling Point, sometimes also referred to as Unique Value Proposition (UVP). One of the most significant things you need to determine is your clinic's USP. It is the unique idea your clinic or facility occupies which can attract the customers. In simpler words, the major thing you would prefer your patients to remember you or your clinic.

With an entire sea of private medical clinics, established medical practices and hospitals, what makes your private practice different? Why would patients opt for your services instead of others? These factors are what many patients would consider when determining which health care practice to opt for. However, as the clinic owner, it is your job to educate them about the unique thing you offer and why your practice stands apart.

To bring focus to your own position, begin by answering the question:*"Why you? Why Your Medical Practice?"* In concise terms, what is the single most important reason—unlike any competitor— that someone should choose you, your medical practice or your organization? How do you present yourself as different, better and more desirable from any other provider that the consumer/patient could call today? What do you do, and who are you for? Consider how these examples from corporate America communicate a market positioning concept:

- ***BMW*** *– the ultimate driving machine*
- ***Crest*** *– fights cavities*

- ***Domino's*** *– hot, fresh pizza delivered in 30 minutes or less*
- ***Excedrin*** *– the headache expert, for the toughest headache*
- ***Home Depot*** *– the do-it-yourself hardware department store*
- ***Mercedes-Benz*** *– the best or nothing*
- ***Nike*** *–just do it*
- ***Volvo*** *– safety for your family*

Recognizing the USP of your own medical practice will require a bit of research and your time. You need to ensure that you are not highlighting something as unique which actually is being practiced in other clinics or medical institutions. This is the reason why proper research must be conducted before recognizing the USP (Figure 2.1).

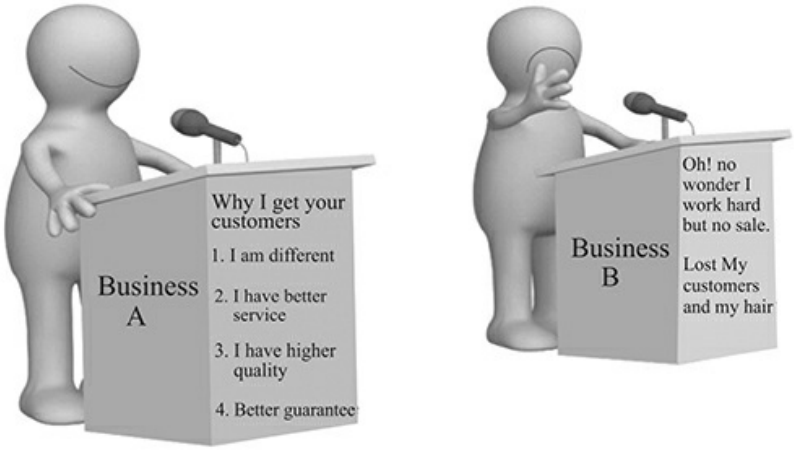
Business A
Why I get your customers
1. I am different
2. I have better service
3. I have higher quality
4. Better guarantee
Business B
Oh! no wonder I work hard but no sale.
Lost My customers and my hair

Figure 2.1: Importance of finding USP (Business A with USP; Business B without USP)

When we started our ophthalmology practice SuVi Eye Hospital & Lasik Laser Center at Kota, we identified our USP as Competent Eye Care with Compassion. We ensured to provide the best possible eye care for every patient visiting our practice in a compassionate way with the aim to exceed from their expectation.

We also followed the ***ABCDEF*** *(****A*** *for Availability;* ***B*** *for Behavior;* ***C*** *for Care, Competence, Compassion;* ***D*** *for Delivery of the best possible services;* ***E*** *for Exceeding patient's expectation;* ***F*** *for Feedback from patients to improve the services) during the starting phase of our journey of medical*

entrepreneurship. All of the routine OPD and operated cases were telephoned periodically by our team enquiring their eye condition and we reassured our routine and operated patients to provide the best possible eye care over the phone even they were away from city or during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown when they were confined to their home. Our city is home to more than 1,50000 coaching students who came to Kota for IIT or Medical coaching. In addition to providing the best possible eye care to these coaching students, we encouraged them to aim high and achieve their goal. Many of these coaching students spread the word about our practice not only in the city (among their friends, coaching faculty members and landlord) but to their home state also. This was reflected by consulting or getting the surgery done on the eyes of their family members. The USP of Competent Eye Care with Compassion and ABCDEF principle helped us to grow our eye care practice from 10 patients per day (in 2006) to about 250 patients per day in a short span of two years.

Understanding the Unique Selling Point

It is human nature to want one's private practice to be famous for many things. There are various businesses that have attempted or are attempting to stand for various things as they want to do well in all domains for the people. However, this is a major mistake made by many businesses especially when they are starting out. They want to be known for their high-quality food and also for their cheapest prices; they want to be known for their best hair-styling and also for best manicures. Similarly, you might want to be known for the best medical service and also want to be known as a clinic with reasonable pricing.

But, there is a problem!

While attempting to be the best at everything, you would end up not being known for anything.

Let your exceptional services do that for you. However, it is essential that you focus on only one thing about your clinic as your USP. Once you attract the customers (patients) with your USP, you can focus on customer (patient) satisfaction and impress them with your high-quality services and care. You don't have to tell them that you are good at everything but you let them experience it.

Initially, all you have to do is determine a USP and promote it rigorously.

There aren’t any formulas or the right ways of setting a USP, but there are a few things that must be taken under consideration in order to determine your USP:

- Identifying the major element of your service as well as your customer (patient) base.
- Studying the campaigns and advertisement of your competitors to recognize the ways you can differ from them.
- Personalizing the USP as per the needs of your customers (patients).

Indeed, this is easier said than done. However, once you conduct good research and figure out the basics, you would be able to easily create your USP.

Major Steps Required to Formulate USP

Following are the main steps you need to take in order to formulate the right USP for your private medical practice:

Conduct an Industry Research

The first thing you must do is conduct research on the health care industry. This will determine the services, products and unique practices that are available in the market for the customers. It must include the identification of your competitors as well as an in-depth analysis of the products and services being provided by them. Identify the services that already exist which you would also be offering and analyze how you can make them different. How are your competitors marketing their services and products? Analyze their advertisements, their websites, their promotions and other marketing content. Focus more on other private medical practices. This research will help you in doing a comparative analysis and discovering the unique things about your services and practice.

Research the Reviews and Feedback

After getting to know your competitors better, you also need to discover how their customers/patients review them. What are the things which their customers/patients like the most? What do they dislike? How about the customer service they are offering? Are people complaining about the bad behavior of the medical staff? Long wait at the reception? Have there been complaints about the billing system? What are the things that they are most happy about? Do they have a supportive and kind staff? What is their range of billing options, payment methods and payment systems? This will help

you in determining a better feel of the industry so you can create an excellent USP.

Research your Target Market

The next thing is to research on your target market. Apparently, who are your target customers (patients)? Who are they? Where do they live? What is their income? What are they most likely to expect from you? Here you can further have a look at the target market of your competitors who are offering similar services as you. What do the customers expect from the services? What are they looking for and what makes them satisfied more about medical services? Is it the staff's behavior? More payment options? High tech equipment?

Research Products

Now you would have a better feel of not just the medical industry but also your competitors. Now you must focus on the products, medications, medical equipment and other supplies. What is being most used at other medical clinics or what helps the patients the most? Are your patients satisfied with the products? What are some of the associated weaknesses and strengths? Have you used the products before? Which products would you prefer to add to your clinic's inventory?

Create a List of Benefits

Now list down all the benefits you can offer to your target market. What are the things that are similar to your competitors and what are the things that are different? Is there anything unique that you are offering? Be specific about everything. The more concise you are at listing these down, the easier it would be to recognize your USP.

Identify the Weaknesses

It is also essential that you note the weaknesses of your services and products so that you can figure out ways to improve. It could be hard to be brutally honest about this yourself but you must try your best. You can also ask your friends, family and colleagues to help you with this. Once you determine the weaknesses, you can eliminate those points from your USP list and focus on improving those weaknesses.

Perform an Analysis

Once you have everything, you can start analyzing and examining the collected information. Review all the details, eliminate things and highlight

the ones you want to be included in your USP. Compare your strengths with the strengths of your competitors. This will further help you in identifying the uniqueness of your practice. Then come up with a draft of your USP.

Test It

The best way to ensure that you have a great USP which is giving you positive results is to test it. You can conduct small research by conducting interviews or a survey with a small group of your target audience. Notice how they react and note down everything. Do this at least twice.

Make Adjustments

Once you have the results, identify the things that were positive and the things that were negative. Determine the ways by which you can improve your USP. Make the necessary changes and then finalize it.

Spread the Word

Congratulations, you now have a USP for your private clinic. The next step is to promote the message and spread it among your target audience. Ensure that this USP is included in all of your advertisements, promotions, press releases, social media pages, blogs and other marketing content. This USP would be the foundation around which you would create your brand and market it.

It is essential that you realize the importance of USP and how it can influence your entire brand. Ensure you don’t rush through this process as this could result in loss of potential customers and hence, affect your revenue.

Tips to Get You Started

Here are a few useful tips that can get you started in determining and creating your USP for your clinic:

Keep it Precise and Short

You need to remember that the USP is not supposed to be an introduction to your business or practice. It must be short and a precise sentence or two. Avoid rambling on or trying too hard to explain. The more precise it is, the more effective it would be.

Be Clear

Ensure that you are clear in sharing the benefits. Let the patients know the guaranteed outcome they will be receiving by trusting your practice. Use simple words and don’t use technical and complex jargon.Remember, people

from all walks of life would be availing of your services. Avoid making it difficult for them to understand.

Write Out Everything

Write down everything that comes to your mind. This strategy helps if you are stuck and are unable to figure out how and what to write. Note down how you want people to see your private clinic, what you want them to think and imagine what you would want from a medical service if you were a patient. In many cases, noting down all your thoughts and ideas not only helps in the thinking process but also in organizing your ideas and figuring out the things that matter most to you. Once you are done, summarize the content in a paragraph or two. Figuring out your USP would be much easier from a jotted down small paragraph instead of the constant flow of ideas shooting in your mind randomly.

Edit as Much as you Can

Keep editing the paragraph(s) and make it more concise till you end up with just one or two sentences. This will be super challenging but this is one of the most crucial elements for determining a good USP. People would prefer to read a sentence or two rather than a complete paragraph in the name of USP. This is why a short, precise sentence that clearly states your USP would be perfect.

Don’t Forget to be Creative

A good USP is one which is new and creative. Don’t be afraid to have a little fun with it. A creative one would ensure that people will remember it, which means ultimately they will remember your clinic as well. As long as you are demonstrating your uniqueness to the target market, your USP is effective even if it has a fun element in it.

Take-Home Message

➢ Recognizing the USP of your own medical practice requires a bit of research and your time.

➢ You must educate your target audience about the unique thing which your private clinic offers and why it stands apart from the crowd.

➢ It is essential that you focus on only one thing about your clinic as your USP.

➢ The more precise your USP is, the more effective it would be.

Chapter 3
Creating an Action Plan for Your Medical Practice

"The path to success is to take massive, determined actions."

- Tony Robbins (Business & Life Strategist, Author)

Medical entrepreneurship is not taught in the medical college curriculum. Many doctors are hesitant to take a path that requires massive investment, and uncertainty about the financial success of the venture. For example, when I was working at an academic university and performing eye surgery, I never realized the cost of the operating microscope, equipments such as phacoemulsifier or lasik laser machines or other disposables. It took me a lot of courage to leave the academic institute and start a new journey of medical entrepreneurship by establishing SuVi Eye Hospital & Lasik Laser Center at Kota. Most of the senior colleagues discouraged us to follow the path with uncharted territory. As quoted by Benjamin Franklin- "Failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail." I read several motivational books to prepare myself for this new journey of medical entrepreneurship. These books became my best friends and I followed positive affirmative messages to utilize my subconscious brain.

Creating an action plan would help you to smoothly convert your passion and dream of starting your own practice into a reality. This action plan enhances the accountability and efficiency in the decisions, selecting and implementing business strategies and overall workings of the business. It determines the means through which your practice will fulfill its objectives in a series of steps and also highlights when and how those steps would be taken. This section will further guide you in understanding an action plan, its importance and how you can create the right one for your private practice.

Understanding an Action Plan and its Importance

An action plan is a way of putting your goals and dreams into action and gradually into a reality. It helps strengthen the vision of your organization and determines the ways in which you and your team can utilize strategies to

fulfill your objectives and reach your goals. This plan typically includes a number of steps to be followed at the right time and the right way to reach your ultimate goal.

- The steps in an action plan include:
- The steps to be taken
- The individual(s) responsible to carry out these steps
- The right time and duration of implementing these steps
- The resources needed to carry out these steps
- The communication required to successfully implement these steps

Creating an action plan is integral for all businesses as it helps the owners with the preparation and planning of the entire operation from the beginning till the completion. Without proper planning and mapping out all the steps, it would be impossible to create your private practice and you are bound to face numerous obstacles and financial losses on the way. Indeed, you don't want to fail in this venture, which is the reason it is important to plan. An action plan clearly outlines every step which is needed to ensure success.

There are numerous factors that indicate the importance of an action plan, including:

- An action plan provides credibility to your business and demonstrates the dedication and commitment of your practice to the individuals involved.
- It prevents any detail, no matter how minor, to be overlooked.
- It demonstrates the strengths and weaknesses of the processes involved as well as the overall working of the business.
- It helps in increasing efficiency in order to save resources, energy, and time in the longer run.
- It also helps enhance the level of accountability to ensure that everyone involved fulfills their duties and responsibilities.

An action plan will keep you focused in the right direction throughout the process of creating your own practice and reduce the chances of distractions.

The Right Time to Make an Action Plan

It is recommended that you develop your action plan before you begin making any decisions regarding your own practice. Another important thing to remember is that you would need different action plans for different stages

of your venture. For instance, create one before starting your venture, one within the first six months of starting your venture and then after every three to five years. You can even create one plan and keep on modifying and amending it as per your requirements and need.

Once you begin to achieve your objectives, goals and vision, you would of course need to revise them in order to aim higher and expand your private practice. However, the most important thing to do is to develop a strong first action plan for your business, after which you can follow a similar pattern as your venture moves forward.

This action plan will work as a blueprint to create and run your practice successfully and profitably. You would be able to efficiently get things done with the help of this action plan. You need to remember that this plan must be visible and followed instead of being simply locked up somewhere in the file cabinet. Once you have built your private practice, revise it to incorporate the changing needs of your practice.

Ways to Create the Right Action Plan

To help you get started, following are the major steps that must be included in an action plan to make it most effective:

Brainstorm Ideas

Firstly, since you are creating a new venture to fulfill your passion, you need to write down all your ideas, thoughts and strategies that come to your mind. Determine what you want to achieve, what are your major goals, what is your ultimate goal. Think about ways to reach your goals, the steps you would take, and the resources you might need. Determine which individuals would play a crucial part in assisting you at different stages. Write down everything that crosses your mind, including the potential problems you see. This will help in clearing your head, organizing your ideas and picking out the best ones.

At present, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has enforced all health care professionals to incorporate several changes in their practice. The entire team should work together to introduce several innovative ideas to continue their practice by following measures of patient triage, physical distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, etc. Telehealth practices are useful for follow-up cases and also efforts should be done to save the cost of the practice by delaying new equipment and new expansion during the time of the COVID-

19 pandemic.

Highlight the Basics

The basic things a business needs in order to successfully run and grow must be included in the action plan as this would work as a base upon which you create your practice. This step would include:

- Objectives
- Mission
- Vision
- Business plan
- Stakeholders
- Strategies
- Target audience

Moreover, anything else you feel must be incorporated and followed by your private practice.

Be Clear and Specific

In order for an action plan to be effective, it needs to be clear and specific. It is important to include important information which you gathered while brainstorming about your mission, vision and other major factors. You need to keep in mind the mission and vision of your practice when setting goals, tasks and determining the strategies. Therefore, you need to be clear right from the start.

It is essential to also include the individuals involved in the completion of each task so that there is no need to waste time later on. By being specific and clear about everything, you are preventing a future conflict which may cause stress, a missed deadline, exhaustion, and unnecessary wastage of sources and time. With a clear and specific pathway, it would be easier for you to implement each step, foresee and prevent potential problems and hurdles and successfully getting your private practice up and running within your projected deadline without any unnecessary delays.

Setting Realistic and Measurable Milestones

Whatever milestone, objectives and planning you create must be realistic and measurable. This is an integral part of attaining your ultimate goal. You can break down the tasks in order to make them less complex and

manageable. Setting realistic milestones helps in maintaining levels of motivation and prevents disappointment that could be caused due to unrealistic and unattainable milestones. Measurable milestones ensure that you can witness the progress being made and that you indeed are moving forward with your project.

Creating SMART Goals and Tasks

One way on making sure that your milestones, tasks and goals are achievable and realistic is to set SMART goals (Figure 3.1). SMART goals are:

- Specific –these are precise and clear to everyone involved
- Measurable – there are ways to evaluate the progress and milestones being achieved
- Achievable – these are attainable as per the talents, skills and capability of you, your team and the overall practice
- Realistic – these can be practically achieved or accomplished reasonably in a realistic time frame.
- Time-Bound – these have a realistic and clearly defined time frame to ensure everything is efficiently achieved within a deadline.

It is best to create a long list of steps and goals. Then, follow the SMART strategy to make them more attainable and practical. You can again brainstorm for ideas with your team to come up with possible solutions and strategies for setting the right goals. Moreover, bigger and/or complicated goals and tasks can be further broken down in smaller tasks and goals to make them less challenging and easier to tackle and achieve without the loss of motivation.

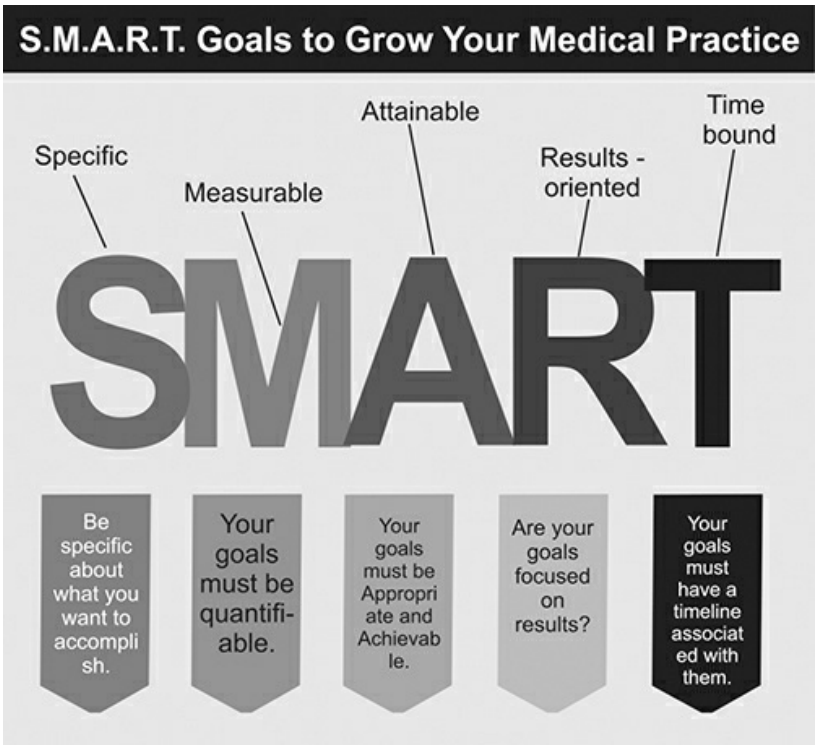
S.M.A.R.T. Goals to Grow Your Medical Practice
Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Results - oriented
Time bound
SMART
Be specific about what you want to accomplish.
Your goals must be quantifiable.
Your goals must be Appropriate and Achievable.
Are your goals focused on results?
Your goals must have a timeline associated with them.

Figure 3.1: SMART Goals to Grow Your Medical Practice

Prioritize

The next thing you need to do is prioritize all these goals and tasks. Highlight the most important things that must be done. Moreover, determine the steps you need to take to complete those tasks immediately without compromising on quality. Categorize all the goals you have created into different categories like:

- Urgent
- High Priority
- Intermediate Priority
- Low Priority

Furthermore, setting a time frame for each step of every goal is also necessary to ensure the Time-Bound element of the SMART goals is maintained.

Review

Once you have completed your action plan, you need to start reviewing it to make sure you haven't missed anything. You also need to make sure that all the goals, milestones, tasks and objectives created are in line with the mission

and vision of your private practice. If needed, you can send this action plan to your partners or other individuals involved, for reviewing the plan and providing feedback. Ensure you make the required changes and amendments.

Follow Through

This might seem easy but it is one of the most tedious parts. There are bound to be many distractions that might come your way but you need to ensure that you sincerely follow through the action plan you have finalized. Make sure all the individuals involved with building your private practice are aware of this action plan including the steps which they need to take and the responsibilities they have to fulfill.

Monitor the Progress

Creating and following the action plan is not enough, you must also monitor the progress being made. Keep a lookout for possible problems that might occur or other issues that are faced by people involved. Take immediate actions where necessary. Moreover, it is possible that you might have to revise your plan or a few parts of it as you progress.

An action plan is a pathway that will help you in going towards your goal of starting your own private practice. Make sure you take the proper time to prepare this plan and put in the right effort to enhance its effectiveness.

Take-Home Message

➢ Creating an action plan enhances the accountability and efficiency in all the decisions of the business.

➢ It helps in putting your goals and dreams into action and gradually into a reality while strengthening the vision of your private practice.

➢ An effective action plan is clear and specific.

➢ Setting realistic milestones help in maintaining levels of motivation and prevent disappointments.

Chapter 4
How to Make a Business Plan for Medical Practice?

"By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail."

– Benjamin Franklin

A business plan is like an action plan but it is more detailed and also focuses on the finances involved. Whether it is a small venture or a big one, a business plan is integral in guiding your decisions, especially the financial ones. It is a roadmap which leads to success. It entails in-depth details and guidance for all areas of your venture – from service details and operations to finance and marketing.

There are many first-time business owners who want to directly jump to the startup mode. However, a business plan is a major step every entrepreneur needs to take in order to check the feasibility and success factor of his/her venture before spending money and time. The main aim of a business plan is to assist you in articulating the right strategy to start your practice. It offers insights into each step you have to take, required sources to attain goals, as well as the anticipated outcome. It also includes an emergency plan or a disaster recovery plan which is a backup plan in case things start to fall apart.

A business plan also determines ways in which you can promote your venture, advertise and market your practice, while also guiding you to grow and expand your practice in the future.

When we decided to start our practice SuVi Eye Hospital & Lasik Laser Center at Kota, we have finalized the following details: ***Mission Statement:*** *Why have we chosen to start our own practice? What are our personal and professional reasons for taking this step? What do we want to achieve?* ***Objectives:*** *Thinking about our practice 1, 3, and 5 years from now. What do we want it to look like? What type of patients are we treating? What type of staff do we have? What type of presence do we have in the community?* ***Budget:*** *We researched various costs in our area and create*

multiple scenarios for what we will be spending to open our practice. Plan A will be what we have to spend to get our doors open. Plan B will include what we will purchase if we have any money remaining from Plan A. Plan C is for our ideal future plans, purchases, and upgrades as our eye practice becomes profitable. ***Timeline:*** *Mapping out our timeline from initial research to opening our doors. Know when each step has to happen for maximum efficiency. If our time for opening is either too short or too long, it will cost us more money.* ***Market Research:*** *We checked out other eye care providers as well as payers in our area. What is our patient demographic? What are the expected charges for services we plan to provide?* ***Profitability Projections:*** *We used a spreadsheet to create projections for expected expenses and revenue for at least our first 12 months.* ***Ideal Patient Profile:*** *Envision the type of patient we want to treat and create a patient avatar. How old is our patient? Where does our patient live? Where do they spend their days? What is their income? What type of services do they want?* ***Services We Will Offer:*** *What type of services do we plan to offer? Do they complement the needs of our ideal patient?* ***Goals:*** *Think again about where we want your practice to be in 1, 3, and 5 years. What will be our annual revenue and future plan for expansion?*

Why do You Need a Business Plan?

Each and every business requires a business plan in order to succeed. Here are some of the major reasons why you must create a business plan:

Clarifying Directions

The main thing a business plan can do is to determine your business and what you want it to be in the future. It clarifies the direction and the purpose you need to take in order to lead your business to the vision you have projected for it in the future. It shows you what you need to do in order to start and go forward.

Mapping out the Future

A business plan is needed to secure funding and investments from possible investors and donors. It maps out what your business stands for, what it wants to accomplish and what it can achieve in the future. This plan is required to show your investors that you have a solid base and plan in place to use their funding and gain profits. The investors need to see the potential in what you

are doing and how it can benefit them. Moreover, it also helps to highlight the potential problems and what you have planned in order to manage them in case they occur. This further builds trust and reliability for the investors in your business. This plan also helps you in understanding your venture even more and ensures that you are heading in the right direction to achieve long-term success.

Main Rules of Creating a Business Plan

The right business plan works like a map and helps you practice what you have theorized. In order to create an effective business plan, you need to first understand the following main rules of creating one:

Conducting Research

Before you start trying to convince patients to come to your practice, you need to determine what the patients truly want from their ideal medical clinic. You need to start conducting research on your competitors and determine their weaknesses and strengths. Compare your ideas and strategies with your competitors' strengths and weaknesses. Determine ways to enhance your practice and make it different from your competitors.

Identifying Target Audience

One of the biggest elements of creating a successful business plan is to create a plan which is specific to your target audience, for instance, financial lenders, potential business partners, or more. You need to tell them what they must know about your medical practice and what makes it unique.

It is recommended that you break down target customers you want to attract towards your business and create variations of your business plans to meet their requirements. Make sure you include the ROI projections and detailed cost in the business plan which is realistic and measurable.

Determining Strengths and Weaknesses

Understand that whoever you send the business plan to, would want you to get straight to the point. You need to create a strong summary of your idea, show that you have a powerful grasp on your plans and have critically evaluated all the steps.

Highlight the strengths and weaknesses of your practices along with the strategies to tackle those weaknesses. You need to understand that the potential business partners and lenders are not interested in flowery phrases but are more interested in numbers. Make sure you create the business plan in

direct and short sentences to share what you want to accomplish and why should they be interested.

Following a Template

While it is essential to ensure that your business plan stands apart from the rest, the most important element of the plan is its written structure. It is true that a lot of lenders and project managers like surprises as they show off creativity, they are more concerned about the idea, finances and the overall feel of your plan. Being in the medical field, your audience would expect specific related categories, headlines, and jargon to indicate you know what you are doing and understand the rules and procedures of this industry. If you try to be too different and come up with your own rules, you might be viewed as a rookie.

It is best to go through a few templates of business plans to get yourself familiarized with the structure of the plan. Go through three to five business plans and create a template for your business and follow through.

These are some of the essential points you need to keep in mind before you start writing down your business plan in order to make sure that it is effective.

Basic Steps Explained

Following are some of the basic categories that must be included in your business plan (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: Creating a Business Plan for Medical Practice

Each of the steps has been explained for your ease:

Mission and Vision

You need to clearly state the mission and vision you have created for your practice. This is an integral part of the business plan since all the decisions you make regarding your private practice will revolve around your mission and vision.

Short and Long-Term Goals

Your potential business partner and/or the lender would want to know what you are aiming for. It is important to mention where you see your private practice in the next five to ten years. Create a list of marketing and advertising techniques you want to utilize to promote and extend your business.

The Team

You would also have to identify all the players with whom you would team up in order to effectively run your practice. It would include the people who are already supporting you, the staff you want to hire, training you want to provide to your team and the major characteristics you are looking for in the individuals you would want to work for you.

Market Segmentation

You must determine the kind of potential patients you are hoping to attract. Mention who your ideal patients are, where they come from and what they are looking for. Moreover, you also need to identify ways through which you want to attract those patients. Are you hoping to get referrals from physicians, are you hoping to attract patients through promotions, discounts or any other methods? Ensure you add a list of potential patients and classify them into categories. Remember, you also must create personas for your ideal patients. These represent the patients you are hoping to get in your private practice. This should be done after extensive research as well as after reflecting on your potential patients' problems and needs.

SWOT Analysis

This is another important element of a strong business plan. Through this analysis, you can identify the Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of your private medical practice (Figure 4.1). This will assist you in better understanding the situation of the market and determine ways of expanding and growing your practice. Keep in mind - to ensure that you

create a successful SWOT analysis, you have to be realistic, specific and must include a comparison of various scenarios and also update your plans and goals accordingly.

Creating a Budget

Once you have all the market analysis and details, you need to start creating a budget for your private practice. This will help you in creating the right way of reaching out to your potential patients and focusing on your budget will help you to support your marketing campaign.

Monitor and Revise

Once your business plan is prepared, it is important to keep monitoring the progress of your private practice. Keep a track of all the spending, leads, referrals, problems, achievements and more. Ensure that you update all the progress and revise or amend your business plan accordingly.

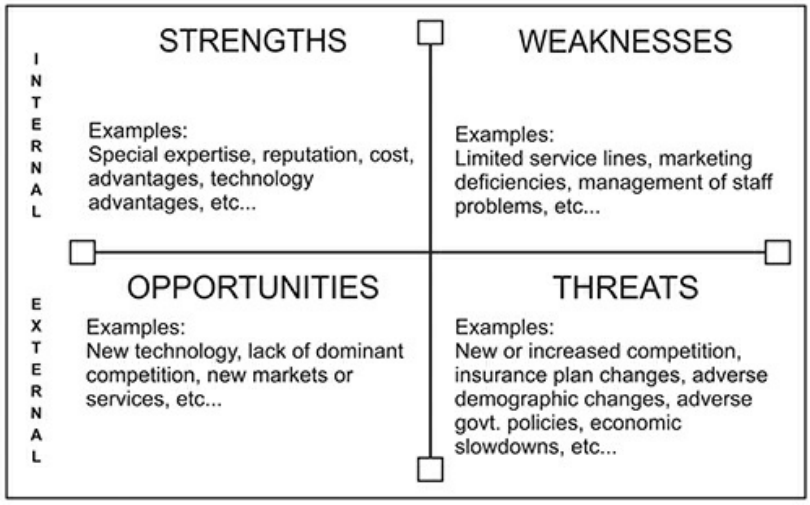

Figure 4.2: SWOT Analysis of Medical Practice.

Understanding Seven Ps of Marketing

Even when you have a solid action and business plan, brilliant services, your medical practice might not be able to survive if you are not reaching out to your potential patients. In order to attract potential patients, you need to come up with strategies that will market the services you offer to the right audience.

The best way to ensure that you implement successful marketing initiatives is to focus on the 7 Ps of Marketing (Figure 4.3). This will enable you to measure and evaluate the business activities of your practice and improve them to get the best possible results. The 7 Ps of Marketing are - PRODUCT,

PEOPLE, PRICE, PROMOTION, PLACE, PACKAGING, and POSITIONING (Figure 4.3). Details of each factor are also discussed.

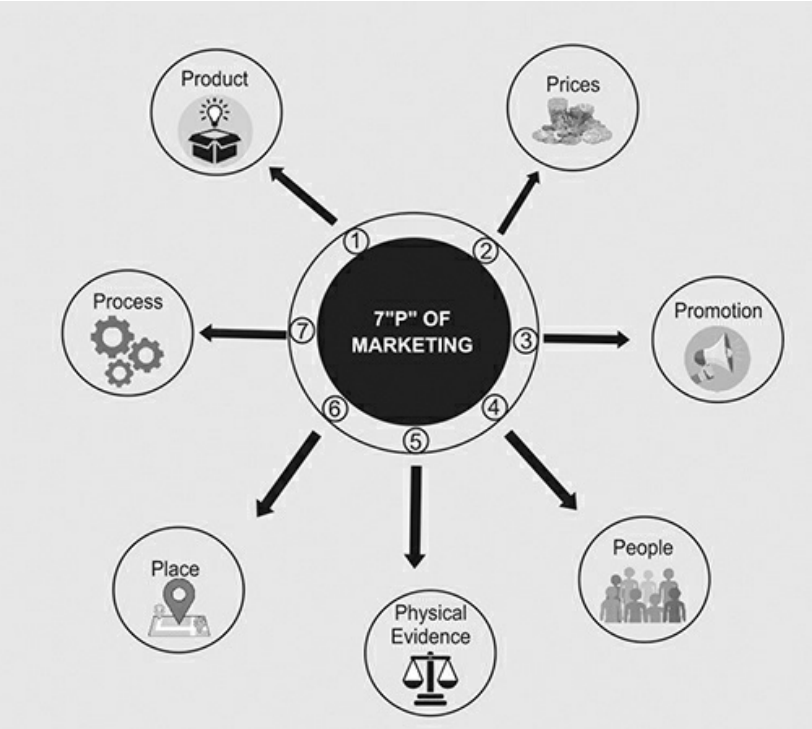

Figure 4.3: Seven Ps of Marketing for Medical Practice

Product

Firstly, you need to have a look at the services you are planning to offer to your patients. Are you going to focus on one specialized service or a few more? Are you hoping to offer consultation and prescription at your practice or are you going to conduct surgeries there too? Are you planning to recruit other experts to offer a number of other medical/health services? Are you planning to focus solely on the area you specialize in? Are these services or products aiming to fulfill the needs and requirements of your patients? What is unique about your services? Are you offering something different than what your competitors are offering? How are you planning to enhance the satisfaction and comfort level of your patients?

People

Health care is indeed about the people – your patients, your employees, your partners and management – anyone who receives or delivers the service, plays a crucial role in the overall product your practice has to offer. Your patients would be the ones who would evaluate the quality of service and the

level of satisfaction you offer them as per their experience. Usually, the patients are more focused on the way the medical staff deals with them, the way you and your team assist them, helps them understand the procedure and makes them feel comfortable. It plays a major role in forming your practice's reputation and image.

Price

It is essential for the price you set for your services to be competitive. It should not be too much that your target patients can't afford it and should not be too low that puts you under financial strains. You must determine the price in such a way that you generate some profits and the patients are happy with it as well. Moreover, you can also introduce promotional prices and discounts to attract their attention. Price can play a major role in the decision-making of the patients. This is why you must carefully decide on the prices for the services you want to offer. You must also be flexible enough to reduce or adjust the price as per the needs of the patients.

Promotion

This is the indirect and direct means of communicating and marketing your products to the masses, especially your target audience. This might include mass interaction or/and personal interaction to promote your services and practice. No matter what or which medium you select, you need to ensure that the promotion is being carried out professionally. The main aim of marketing your private practice is to evaluate where, what, when and how you offer your products and services to the patients.

Place

This means you must present your services to the right audience, at the right time and in the right place. Nevertheless, the place is the location of your individual practice wherein you will offer your expert services to the patient. However, it is possible that you might also provide at-home services or open up different outlets to reach more patients. The location of the practice is also a major deciding factor for the patients.

Packaging

Since you are offering health services, the packaging here would refer to your website, brochures, reception, waiting area, front office, as well as the exterior of your office. This can also mean the appearance of you and your medical staff. You would be surprised to know how much the patients'

opinion of your overall practice is based on the things they observe right from the minute they see your office.

Positioning

This is how your medical practice is viewed by your patients or potential patients. You would have to determine how you want your patients to view your practice and make efforts to position your brand that way.

In order to successfully grow your private practice and attract new patients, you need to come up with a strong and powerful marketing strategy. In case you are unsure how to market your practice, you can hire an expert or seek help from a professional marketing organization. There are various marketing agencies that focus on medical organizations. This is a great way to make sure that you are utilizing the right marketing tools and strategies in order to reach out to your patients.

Take-Home Message

➢ A business plan is a major step you need to take in order to check the feasibility and success factor of your venture before spending money and time.

➢ It offers insights into each step you have to take, required sources to attain goals as well as the anticipated outcome.

➢ You need to determine what you want your business to be when you start and where you expect it to be in the future.

➢ The investors need to see the potential in what you are doing and how it can benefit them before they invest in your venture.

➢ You need to conduct research on your competitors and determine their weaknesses and strengths and compare them to yours.

➢ You must highlight the strengths of your practices, as well as the weaknesses, along with strategies to tackle those weaknesses in the business plan.

➢ Always go through a few templates of business plans to get yourself familiarized with the structure.

➢ Create a list of marketing and advertising techniques you want to utilize to promote and extend your business.

➢ The best way to ensure that you implement successful marketing initiatives is to focus on the 7 Ps of Marketing.

➢ Ensure that you update all the progress and revise or amend your business plan as well as marketing strategies accordingly.

Chapter 5
How to Manage Finances of Your Medical Practice?

"A budget is telling your money where to go instead of wondering where it went."

– Dave Ramsey

Financial Options

In order to initiate your venture, you need finances. Keep in mind that you would require a good lump sum of money if you want to successfully start your own medical practice. Investing your own saving might be a good idea, but it might not be enough to cover all the expenses. For that, you would need to have a look at the financial options available for you.

There are some investors who want to invest their money in health care institutions; you can send your business proposals to relevant investors or better, you can personally meet them to share your vision and dream. However, remember that investors or lenders need to see numbers. Make sure your business plan covers all the expenses involved including the costs of services and equipment and how you will make a profit. You need to show them how your practice can benefit them.

You would require funds to not just create a practice from scratch but would also need funds to purchase furniture for the office, supplies, relevant equipment required for your service and of course to hire and train your staff.

It is also possible that you would have to apply for business loans in order to cover all expenses. For this you need to submit your business proposal and present your vision to the lenders. There are various kinds of loans offered by lenders for medical practices, including:

- Debt consolidation
- Leases for medical equipment
- Practice procurement

- Working capital

A loan is a fund that you can utilize as per your business needs. You are likely to apply for a startup loan of fund which is offered to startup businesses. Moreover, there are also loans which are specifically offered to medical startups which would be ideal for your practice.

You can also apply to get a lease for medical equipment since they are rather expensive. Additionally, with continuous advancement in technology, you may need to get these leases from time to time in order to ensure that your practices have the latest technology and equipment to offer the best high-tech service to your patients. There are various payment options for medical equipment leases depending on the lenders. You can opt for the one which is most suitable for you and which fulfills the most requirements of your private practice.

Seek an Expert’s Help

It is unwise to embark on the journey of starting your own medical practice without a solid plan. Moreover, it is highly unusual to begin this journey that invests so much of your money, effort and time, without consulting an expert. You would be surprised to know the number of business owners who neglect talking to a financial expert or advisor thinking that they can handle the finances themselves. This typically does not end well for them.

You indeed are an expert in a specific medical field but that doesn’t make you a financial expert, no matter how good you are at handling money. Starting your own private practice is not going to be a walk in the park. It is a massive investment and you need to be extremely careful when making decisions, especially related to finances. It is highly recommended that you consult a financial expert to help plan all the finances of your practice efficiently.

A financial expert has the right expertise and experience to assist you in making the best possible financial decisions and get the most from your initial investment. They will evaluate your situation, your business plan and the financial options available to you, as well as the timeline and will guide you accordingly in a way that will result in a profitable business.

If you are still not convinced, here are some major reasons why you need to seek help from a financial expert before you begin investing money in your private practice:

Required Expertise

A financial advisor will ask numerous questions about your practice, even the most obvious ones but answering those questions will make it easier for you to better understand your practice and might even lead to making improvements in your plans. Their expertise will help you in making your practice more profitable and efficient as they will focus on those actions that will generate positive and profitable results.

At the initial stage of building your practice, you would be performing numerous roles yourself. You might be handling the areas that you don't even have much knowledge about. From tech support to marketing decisions, you would be the one to make decisions. However, having a professional financial expert to help you would make it easier for you to make the right decisions financially. It will protect you from investing in things that would lead to losses.

If you are financially protected with an expert by your side, your chances of error greatly decrease. Suffering from financial mistakes and losses at such an early stage of your practice can lead to graver consequences. Overpaying vendors, delaying payments, problems with cash flow and mismanagement of money are common errors typically made by small business owners who are just getting started. The best way to avoid them is to consult a financial advisor.

An expert will offer accurate cash projections based on numerous factors for all the financial decisions you plan to make which will ensure that you don't make amateur mistakes. It will enable you to create and expand your business successfully right from the start. Moreover, they can point out the best opportunities and risks that may come your way so that you can make the decisions accordingly.

Better Cost Savings

The great thing about seeking help from a financial expert is that it enables you to have better control over the pathway your business is heading in. It is bound to save you money and time. It is a wise move to not perform the tasks which aren't among your core abilities as it prevents your business from reaching its full expertise.

With the advice of a financial advisor, you would be able to make complex financial decisions easily and quickly. It will allow you to confidently make

the right financial decisions without stressing over any kind of uncertainties because your financial advisor will provide you with proper research and calculations regarding all possible options.

This will put you in a better position to handle your business and to avoid costly mistakes.

Preparation for Future Developments

When you think about the future of your business, it is quite easy to get emotional or go overboard. It is normal to get overwhelmed, scared or excited when you are setting long-term goals and envisioning the future developments you want from your business. You might lead yourself to disappointment by setting unrealistic and unattainable goals.

However, all of this can be avoided with the help of an expert. They will give you the best advice when it comes to financial matters, whether they are things you have to do right then or whether you are planning for the future. They will offer you clarity and keep you focused on the vision and realistic goals as per your business objectives. This way you would be able to plan realistically and with the right tactic.

A financial advisor will assist you in facing the facts and assessing the estimation and possibilities of accomplishing the goals you are setting in the required time. There are very few business owners who think about future challenges and changes in technology, markets, economy and other aspects when they are projecting and planning their startup.

The advice and perspective of an expert financial advisor help a new private practice to tackle any possible threats that might come its way.

Balancing Personal and Business Finances

Understanding and balancing the personal and business finances (profits well as the expenses) remain very important for a new medical entrepreneur. Since starting your own business is a time-consuming and difficult task, majority of the business owners tend to only focus on the finances of their business but not on their personal finances.

With a financial advisor, your personal finances will also be taken care of along with your business finances. It is essential to coordinate these two finances for tax, investment and cash flow purposes. The expert will also be working as a quarterback between the other experts you might need for your private practice as it escalates, which include real estate attorney, insurance

broker, bookkeeper, business attorney and your accountant. This will ensure that all the processes are going on smoothly and the finances for all aspects of your business as well as your personal finances are being monitored and managed well. This is significant for success in the long term.

The majority of new business owners avoid seeking assistance from an expert financial advisor just to save money. However, this is not a wise decision, especially with such an uncertain financial situation of the market.

Creating a Budget

No business can run successfully without setting a budget as there are bound to be plenty of financial issues that will come in the way. This is true for any type of business and at any level. No matter how big or how small, it will come crumbling down without a budget. It is essential to create a financial plan and a budget along with a business plan if you want to see your private practice prosper in the long term.

A budget that is carefully constructed will enable you to keep continuous track of all your finances, while also ensuring that you don't go overboard with the expenses. Moreover, it would allow you to determine the right opportunities that come your way and help you decide which ones you should go for if you want your practice to expand.

Having a proper understanding of your budget opens up your business' ability to hiring the right staff, providing them with the right training as well as help in determining which new equipment and medical supplies the business should invest in.

- Some more benefits of setting a budget include:
- Efficiently preparing the taxes
- Making informed decisions regarding overhead expenses, benefits, bonuses and salaries
- Expanding operations
- Setting more goals
- Attracting more investors

A detailed budget also makes it easier to create regular updates and reports about finances to share with investors and partners as well as potential investors and partners. It also helps determine whether the strategies being utilized are the right ones and if there is a need to make any changes.

Step One – Make Categories of Expenses

Start by determining things you would need to open your practice for and start taking patients. What are the most crucial things? The best way to do that is by dividing your budget into categories. You can break them down into two categories. These categories can be more as per your situation and requirements.

1. Fixed Assets – The first category includes equipment and facilities to set up in the building.

Facilities: Signage, tenant improvements, fixtures and furniture, lease security deposits, etc

Equipment: Medical equipment, surgery tools, computers, office furniture, etc

2. Startup Costs – The second category includes supplies and materials as well as other costs.

Supplies and Materials: Promotion and advertising materials like brochures and pamphlets, etc., production and health-related materials

Other Costs: License fee, insurance deposits, permits and other licenses, accounting and attorney fee, etc

Step Two – Assessing Variable and Fixed Expenses

It is important to gather data on your monthly fixed expenses. These are the expenses that are constant and are not dependant on the number of patients you see. Here is an example of the list of possible fixed expenses to give you a better idea:

- Business Loan Payment
- Miscellaneous expenses
- Employee benefits/pay
- Professional fees (accounting and legal)
- Business insurance
- Promotion, publicity, advertising and commitments
- Dues/subscriptions
- Office supplies
- Equipment lease payments

- Website service fees
- Credit card processing - monthly fee for service
- Phones (business phones and cell phones)
- Utilities
- Rent

Variable expenses are the ones that change as per the number of patients that come to your practice every month.

Step Three – Estimating Monthly Sales

This is typically a complex part of the entire budget since you can't determine the exact number of sales or profit you would earn for your new venture. The best thing to do is to make at least three sales projections:

- Project the best-case scenario where you estimate the most optimistic number you believe your private practice can earn in the first year.
- Project the worst-case scenario where you estimate the worst possible number your private practice can get in its first year.
- Project a likely scenario where you estimate a number in between the above scenarios. This is the estimation you should include in the business plan to share with your investors and partners.

In order to make your budget as realistic as possible, you need to keep in mind the fluctuations of the patients' payments. You might offer flexible payment options for the ease of your patients, options to make the payment in installation, might offer discounts or free services to the patients in need; which means, it is possible that you might not get a lot of revenue in a few months. Therefore, it is best to set realistic revenue projections for each month keeping these factors in mind.

After calculating the variable costs for each month, include it in the fixed costs to determine the total expenses for each month and include that in your budget as well.

Step Four – Make a Cash Flow Statement

You can create the cash flow statement by adding the total cost to the total revenue estimate for every month. Whatever your cash flow projections are, you can change the revenue values for each month based on the three scenarios mentioned above. This will help you get an idea about your

practice's cash needs and the amount you might have to borrow to attain working capital.

Tips to Create a Start-up Budget

Following are some tips that can help you in getting started with your budget:

- Utilize accounting software to make the budget will help to utilize your existing accounts and would be easier for you to make the changes.
- A spreadsheet program can also be utilized to make a budget instead of a software program.
- Majority of the lenders want the cash flow statement of at least three years, showing projections for each month as well as annual and quarterly income statements of three years.
- Remember that Income Tax is a variable expense since you can't project the exact amount of taxes you would have to pay till the next income is calculated. It is best to not include your taxes in neither the variable nor the fixed expenses. You can make another category to include the taxes in.

Even with these steps and tips, the best thing you can do for your private practice is to consult an expert. A financial advisor would be able to better help you with all the finances of your medical practice including budget-making.

Minimizing Expenses During COVID-19 Crisis?

Most of the medical practices are facing financial challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic due to a considerable decrease in the outpatient and surgical volume. Managing finances and saving the running expenses of the private practice is very important to follow during this time. Often doctors are busy treating patients so financial planning and saving the running cost, minimizing the expenses etc. become somewhat neglected. Always remember- A Penny Saved is a Penny Earned.

We saved significant amount of money at our practice SuVi Eye Hospital & Lasik Laser Center, Kota by following few pearls of wisdom. These include: always purchase a new equipment(s) in a group of 2-3 colleagues and negotiate for the minimum possible price, extended warranty (two years), and comprehensive maintenance contract (CMC) before finalizing the equipment. If you are an eye surgeon with good volume of cataract-IOL surgery, you can

consider an option of intraocular lens (IOL) bundling to get a new equipment. Never be in hurry or bow to the pressure created by the manufacturers to buy an expensive equipment, rather carefully calculate the financial viability and need of the equipment in your practice. Periodical checking of practice account, account audit to minimizing financial irregularities, keeping a close watch on all counters/employees handling cash, minimizing the due payment from patients as well as from insurance companies.

Overspending in marketing, paid advertisement in the print media or on digital platform, etc is not much needed nowadays. Rather, use social media and online ratings as free advertisement. You can post health-related news articles/videos on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter etc. to promote yourself, your work and your skills. Always encourage patients to write online Google reviews. Always remember in private practice, a fully satisfied patient remains the best marketing strategy to refer more and more patients by the word-of-mouth publicity.

Take-Home Message and Tips to Manage Your Finances

➢ Invest in customer service to focus on making your daily operations as seamless as possible by investing in tools and technology (software).

➢ Manage your cash flow efficiently by using income and expenses trackers and reports from online software that allows you to stay on top of finance easily.

➢ Embrace technology to automate as many tasks as you can so you can balance your medical practice and the management of the day-to-day operations of your medical clinic.

➢ Manage your assets and inventory well and make sure that you don’t have to purchase something repeatedly, invest in your assets and learn how to manage them well through inventories and maintenance.

➢ Know your financial goals by setting monthly or weekly revenue goals so you can reach your targets and make adjustments if you need to do for successful medical practice. Be prepared for a financial slowdown and manage your finances during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter 6
How to Select the Legal Structure for Medical Practice?

"To survive in modern times, a company must have an organizational structure that accepts change as its basic premise, lets tribal customs thrive, and fosters a power that is derived from respect, not rules. In other words, the successful companies will be the ones that put quality of life first. Do this and the rest - quality of product, productivity of workers, profits for all - will follow."

– Ricardo Semler

Selecting the Legal Structure

Starting a private practice means you also need to determine the type of legal structure you want your practice to be. The right legal and business entity is dependent on the goals and needs of you and your private practice. Many medical practitioners don't see the point of selecting a legal structure since all medical practitioners are personally responsible for their malpractice or professional negligence. Even though these legal structures might not protect you from malpractice or professional negligence, it will still protect you and your private practice from the wrongful or neglectful practice of others.

For instance, a patient falls in your building and decides to sue you for the sustained injuries. In such a scenario, the legal entity will be sued instead of you being personally sued. This means that all your personal assets would be safe.

There are various types of legal and business entities that you can opt to practice, including Limited Liability Partnership, Public Limited Company, Sole Proprietorship and more. Each of these comes with its own set of pros and cons in terms of administration, flexibility, tax treatment and personal liability protection. Therefore, it is essential to understand all the structures and factors in the requirements and goals of your practice before you make

the decision.

Following are the major legal structures explained:

Sole Proprietorship

This is one of the most common structures of business used by a majority of the business owners. This can be viewed as a one-man company in which one individual is responsible for controlling and managing the entire business which he/she owns. In this structure, the owner's liability is unlimited. This structure is appropriate for the businesses in which the market is localized, limited and the customers are looking for personal attention; a business which is simple and requires fast decisions.

Moreover, this is suitable for a business where there isn't much risk-involvement and the required capital is limited. The main features of sole proprietorship are as follows:

- One individual is the owner and has the legal title to the properties and assets of the company/business.
- The total amount of profit generated by the business goes to the owner of the business. However, he/she is also the only person responsible for the total amount of losses and risks that the business has to bear.
- The business owner is the only individual who is responsible for managing the entire business.
- The owner is the one who provides the business' entire capital. He/she might collect funds from outside sources through contacting lenders.
- For the law, both the business enterprise and the proprietor are one and the same.
- The owner's liability is unlimited.
- In this structure, the legal formalities are fewer as compared to the other structures.

Partnership

Another popular business structure opted for by various business owners is partnership. In this structure, two or more individuals jointly own the business and share the profits that the business generates. All the owners of the business are collectively referred to as a firm and are individually referred to as partners.

The best thing about this legal structure is that individuals from different walks of life, managerial skills, talents and capabilities can join hands and create a business. This enhances the strength of the business, financial resources, expertise and reduces the chances of risks and losses. A partnership structure is suitable for smaller businesses like wholesale and retail trade, professional services, manufacturing units and more.

Typically, those businesses that start off as partnership businesses are later converted into a company when it is financially attractive and economically viable for the investors. Some of the main features of this legal structure are as follows:

- In order to form a partnership business, at least two individuals are needed. The maximum number of individuals to become partners in one business can be 10.
- The relationship among the individuals forming a partnership business is formed through a contract which can be implied, written, or verbal. This contract is called a 'partnership deed.'
- The ratio of sharing the profits can be decided between the partners beforehand and is typically added in the contract.
- The partnership liability is unlimited.
- In this structure, all the operations of the business can either be performed by all the partners involved or one of them who acts for all. It is essential to have a relationship of mutual faith and trust among the partners in order to make the business successful.
- As per the law, the business is not recognized as a separate entity from the partners.
- It is not compulsory to register the partnership.

Limited Liability Partnership (LLP)

This type of legal structure is a general partnership that is managed by all the partners and is taxed like partnership firms. However, the liability of the partners in case of malpractice or professional negligence of other partners is restricted to the assets of the partnership.

In this structure, the partners have better liability protection as compared to the partners of general partnership firms. However, they also have unlimited liability for their practice obligations.

In order to create an LLP, all the partners have to submit a form to the state. Moreover, they are also required to submit annual renewals in order to maintain their liability protection. The business is also required to include LP or LLP with the name of their business to indicate it as being an LLP. Following are some of the main features of LLP:

This legal structure has the easiest process when compared to forming businesses with other legal structures. It requires fewer formalities.

- This legal structure is a body corporate similar to a company. This means that the business has a separate existence in comparison to the partnership firms. In LLP, the entity and the partners are considered as separate as per the law.
- The LLP business is referred to with its own business name instead of the names of the partners.
- This is also referred to as a distinct entity from the partners' personal life. Both the company as well as the individuals who own it are separate from one another. All the liabilities, lawsuits and debt repayments must be tackled by the company instead of the owner.
- Businesses that might be vulnerable to lawsuits can function best as an LLP since it provides added protection.
- The LLP business has continuous succession. In spite of any changes in the LLP partners, the business will continue being the same entity with unchanged possessions, estates, immunities and privileges.
- According to the 2008 LLP Act, the business has complete freedom for managing all of its affairs. The partners are free to determine the ways they want to manage or run their business as per their agreement. The Act doesn't regulate the businesses to a larger extent but instead offers its partners the freedom to move forward in the way they want to.
- In this legal structure, it is easier to leave or be a partner in the business. Moreover, ownership transfer is also easy as per the LLP agreement terms.
- A major advantage of this legal structure is taxation. LLP businesses have a lower tax rate as compared to the rate of other legal structures. These businesses are also not subjected to the Dividend Distribution Tax, which means, tax would be applied to the profit amount which is divided among all partners.

Limited Liability Company

This legal structure is a flexible type of business that combines the elements of corporate and partnership legal structures. This entity is like an association of partners who have similar characteristics of corporate and individual identities.

This might be a corporation, a partnership or a sole proprietorship. It has similar legal formalities as a company. It has limited owners' liability against the actions of others. Some of the main features of LLC are as follows:

- As mentioned before and as the name indicates, it has limited liability for the partners. This means that even though all the employees, managers and other members are personally responsible for their own civil wrongs, torts and negligence, the members are still protected from the torts and negligence liability that has been committed by others. This allows the partners and managers to recruit employees freely and perform high liability functions that otherwise would place the personal assets of the members at risk.
- This type of legal structure also offers flexibility in the way the LLC businesses are taxed. Since the IRS doesn't have a different category for this legal structure, these businesses are taxed as a sole proprietor if it has one owner, as a partnership in case of multiple owners or as a corporation in case of multiple or a single organization. If the entity comes under a corporation, then the partners or owners have a choice to either be taxed as Sub-chapter C Corporation or Sub-chapter S Corporation; these refer to the IRS corporate taxation rules which are selected by the members. This way the members can opt for the taxation form which is more suitable for their business.
- This legal structure offers simple operation and documentation. In a majority of the states, the members are not required to appoint directors for the board in order to run their business nor are they required to file meeting minutes, conduct shareholders meeting annually, etc. Even the record keeping is simple, unlike that of corporations.

Public Limited Company

These are the companies that adhere to The Indian Companies Act of 1956. The members of the company fund the capital via shares. In order to establish a PLC, it is essential for the company to have at least 7 members. Moreover,

a PLC has a distinct legal existence aside from the owners or members. But the members' shares are transferred freely without the advice of the members. One thing to bear in mind is that the responsibilities of the Board of Directors and the shareholders (members) are different. The Board of Directors runs and manage the company while the shareholders on the other hand are not supposed to interfere with the operations and management of the company. This legal structure of the company reduces the shareholders' risk but it also increases the risk of fraudulent activities.

Following are the main features of this legal structure:

- The company is distinct and different from the members as per the law. The company has its distinct name; its liabilities and assets are distinct and separate from its members. A PLC can own property, borrow money, incur debts, create a bank account, initiate contracts, employ people, sue and be sued as well.
- The members of PLC have limited liability.
- The company can't stop existing unless its mission has been successfully completed or it goes bankrupt. The company's members can continue to change but it won't affect the functioning of the company. Insolvency or death of a member also doesn't affect the company's existence.
- The company's shares are transferable freely but may be subjected to specific conditions like none of the members is necessarily or permanently wedded to the company. In case one of the members transfer his shares to someone else, then that individual assumes the role of that member. He/she acquires the complete rights of the previous member as per the shares transferred.
- All the activities of the company performed through the Board of Directors, like contracts and other agreements must be conducted under the name of the company and its seal or the official company's signature. It is essential for the company's name to be engraved on the seal. If there is a document that does not include the company's seal then it must not be taken as authentic and it wouldn't have any kind of legal force.
- The PLC is managed and administered through the Board of Directors. The members, called shareholders are merely the ones who own the company's shares but don't necessarily have to be the ones to manage and run the company.

Corporations

A corporation is managed and run by a Board of Directors and this must be owned by a single stockholder or more. The shareholders elect the Board of Directors and the day-to-day operations are conducted by the employees or officers who the Board of Directors appoints. In this type of legal structure, one individual can be the sole office, director and stockholder of the company. All the officers, directors and stockholders are protected against the company's liabilities. This includes the liabilities for their personal malpractice or negligence while performing the corporate role except in specific situations.

In a typical corporation, the company's losses and profits are not passed through to the owners' tax returns. The corporation is responsible to pay its taxes and file for its tax returns on its own. In some cases, the corporation might also be subjected to annual fees like state franchise taxes.

Some of the key features of this legal structure are as follows:

- The owners of the company have limited liability and their assets are secured against the corporation's liabilities and debts. The business losses don't make the shareholders liable.
- In this type of legal structure, it is easier to increase the capital through sales of bonds and stocks. There can be an unlimited amount of investors in a corporation.
- The owners can sell stock shares easily since the process of transferring ownership is fairly simple.
- As mentioned earlier, the corporation can continue existing even after the owners' death as it has perpetual lifetimes.
- Certain expenses in the corporation are tax deductible. The owners are entitled to receive tax-free features like deductions in insurance and retirement plans.

Understanding Legal Liabilities

It is essential to understand where exactly your legal liabilities start before you open your own private practice. In numerous cases, it starts even before you begin opening the doors of your practice. It is important that you have a stronger grasp on your existing personal overhead and debt before you even consider initiating your own practice as it can create numerous financial

problems for you.

You need to keep in mind that you would have to pay all the related bills yourself which is why it is crucial to determine if it would be feasible for you to handle both your personal and business financial commitments and goals. It is highly recommended that you plan both, your personal and business finances for at least 90 days to get a better idea and control over the legal liabilities.

You must determine the nature of your incurring debt and the contracts you are about to sign; ensure that the debt obligation is restricted to the proportional ownership if you are purchasing real estate for your practice with a partner. Make sure that you aren't "severely and jointly liable" for the entire debt amount in a single pool.

It is unwise to rely on agreements or promises that are not in a written agreement between the lender and the borrower. This can lead to major financial problems related to fraud and unmet commitments. It is best to consult a financial expert when it comes to legal contracts and financial decisions. This will ensure that you are protected from the liabilities of others and won't be the sole individual to bear the burden if anything goes wrong or if there are financial losses. This way all the concerned parties are protected. You also must make sure that no personal asset is exposed and you take appropriate asset protection measures.

Legal Tips

Following are some legal tips to help you effectively create and start your private medical practice:

- It is of utmost importance that whatever practices you utilize to treat your patients, the medication you use as well as any other therapies or means you employ as treatments must be legally defensible since there could be a cause of investigation or regulatory scrutiny in case of any lawsuits.
- Ensure that you document all the medical reasons behind your selection of treatment and make sure that you can establish a well informed and implement a thoughtful decision when treating your patients. The documentation and reasoning can later help you in any lawsuits that any patient might file against you.
- In the eyes of the medical board, the care stand is whatever that has been decided by the medical board when it recruits an expert. It is possible that

an expert you employ is biased against alternative and complementary medicinal treatments and could be on the conventional side. Therefore, it is essential to establish some form of credibility.

- Moreover, it is also essential that you document the full informed consent of the patient throughout the treatment. You must include how the patient was informed about all the medical treatment options and the recommended treatment option and that he agreed to the treatment you or your team decided. You need to include that the patient was well aware of the choices and the disclosures and he/she voluntarily and intelligently consented to the medical decisions.
- This ensures that legally the health care provider was not negligent or careless in making the medical decisions and that the patient and his/her family were well aware of all the advantages, complications and other related issues associated with the treatment.
- Failing to attain informed consent can result in professional negligence and malpractice. It is essential, therefore, to maintain the practice of informed consent in order to protect yourself and your private practice from liabilities.
- You need to acquire all the relevant licensing required by the state in order to legally practice. Before you open the doors of your practice to patients, you need to determine which licensing and certification are required and make sure you get all of them before you begin your medical practice.
- You need to make sure that all the medical experts you employ, the employees and the entire staff of your medical practice are aware of all the laws, rules and regulations.
- Make sure you go through all the regulatory, legal, insurance and other related rules and issues so that you have better control over your business and so you can protect your practice and its assets against any liabilities.

Creating Employment Contracts

The employee contracts are written agreements between the employee and the employer in which the terms and conditions of the employment as well as the responsibilities and respective rights of the employee and employer are clearly stated. An employer might need full-time or part-time employees or in some cases, both. They outline all the details in the contract which the

employee views and signs to show his/her agreement. Once you start hiring employees for your private practice, you are required to create contracts for these employees first so that everything is clear right from the beginning. It is essential to start implementing strong human resources (HR) policies and practices to ensure you have a positive and strong workforce.

These contracts are beneficial for you since they give you better control over the employment terms, which include the degree of certainty and security in the fact that the employees will continue working with you throughout the term mentioned in the contract or they risk facing penalties in case of an early termination of the contract.

These contracts also give you better control over the work product of your employees. This can be highly beneficial if any of your employees are responsible for creating or having access to trade secrets or confidential information.

So how exactly do you create an employee contract? You have to include all the relevant details. Some essential things you need to include in the contract are as follows:

Details of the Job

This is one of the major things you have to include in the contract. Add in the major roles and responsibilities that the employee would oversee during the job. This also includes the job title, the department or team he/she would be working with throughout their employment. Moreover, you also need to include the ways in which their performance would be evaluated as well as their reporting authority.

Compensation and Added Benefits

You also have to include the entire package you are offering, which means the compensation of the employees and added benefits that your employee can enjoy. This would include hourly rate or an annual salary, increment information, incentives and/or bonus and how all of these can be earned. Moreover, the benefits plan must also be explained which could include eye care, dental and medical care, etc. You need to mention the percentage you as an employer would pay as well as the percentage the employee would have to pay. In case you also offer a retirement fund, then you also need to add the details. Any other benefit you want to offer your employees must be included in the contract.

Vacations, Sick Days and Time Offs

You must explain in detail all the days off including the policy on paid vacations, sick days and other leaves. You need to mention the number of days per year that the employees can enjoy paid vacations and the days they would have paid sick leaves if needed. You must also include the expectations you have from employees regarding family emergencies, sick days and unpaid leaves. Are you willing to offer make-up hours for the employees who don't have leaves left but have some kind of emergency? All of these things must be added in the contract.

Classification of Employees

You must be clear in defining if the employee you are hiring is a contractor or is an employee, part-time or full-time, to meet the compliance of labour laws, insurance and tax. Lawsuits might be filed against you just because of the mis-classification of employees. Start learning the difference between contractors and employees so that you can easily classify the hired employees properly right from the beginning.

Employment Period and Schedule

The employee contract has to state clearly if the employment is supposed to be ongoing or if it is for a specific duration. It needs to include the date and hours per week or hours every day the employee is supposed to work. This will assist in defining the employee and employer relationship. If you are offering flexible hours then it should be clearly stated in the contract. If you also have a flexible working option like remote work or work from home, then this must be included in the contract as well. In case you expect the employee to work on weekends or at night, clearly explain how often and when in order to avoid future disappointment and confusion.

Confidentiality

It is extremely important that you protect all sensitive information like patients' data, trade secrets and other crucial information related to your practice. Therefore, you need to have your employees sign a confidentiality agreement through this contract to ensure that they don't share that important information with anyone. There is no need to create a separate contract for this purpose as you can easily include a section of confidentiality in the employment contract.

Privacy Policy

You also need to clarify in the employment contract the usage of email and social media usage on your institution's property. For instance, if you want the employees to not use the computers or mobile device of the company for accessing their social media profiles or personal emails, then you need to clearly state that. If you don't want any negative image of your private practice on social media, you must include this in the contract as well that employees are not supposed to share anything negative about the practice.

Terms and Conditions of Termination

The contract should clearly state whatever is required of both parties to terminate the employer and employee relationship. This should include the notice period needed and whether the termination must be in a written form.

Outplacement or Severance Plan

In case you decide to terminate an employee or if the employee wants to resign then you need to keep a positive brand image. For this, you can offer an outplacement or severance plan.

After Termination Requirements

This employment contract must also include any mandates or restrictions on employees once they leave your practice. For instance, the employee might not be allowed to initiate their own business in a similar industry as yours for a certain time. The employee would not be allowed to independently work with your patients. You must clearly define all the terms in order to protect your business and your patients.

All of these points are basic factors that make a great starting point. However, there may be plenty of other things that you may have to include to further protect yourself as an owner and your private practice. Moreover, there may be other things that can more clearly describe the employer and employee relationship. It is essential that you think about all these things and write them all out. This is how you can create a solid employment contract.

Tips to Protect Your Practice from Lawsuits

Malpractice laws are something that you need to keep at bay. These lawsuits are not merely based on medical treatment errors anymore. These are now based on the way patients felt about the treatment and the way they were treated. If they feel they had been mistreated then they have the right to file a malpractice suit against you and your practice. This might seem irrational but this is the reality and this is the reason why it is of utmost importance that

you take necessary precautions and care to protect yourself from such lawsuits.

Following are some effective tips that can help you:

Establishing Strong and Positive Patient-Health Provider Relationship

All the patients expect their caregivers to provide them with high-quality care services. This is the reason they would come to your practice. They want to be treated with respect, kindness and concern. Being a caregiver, it is your job to ensure that all your patients feel comfortable. This is something that many care providers don't focus on. When the patient is comfortable with you, only then he would be able to clearly explain what the problem is and the more accurately you know what and how they are feeling, the better you would be able to do the diagnosis.

Honest and open communication, with respect and kindness is crucial to creating a positive relationship with your patient. It enables you to know the patients better and enables their families to have a good understanding of the entire treatment. It earns you their trust which makes the relationship stronger.

Being Consistent and Clear

You also must ensure that you clearly communicate everything to the patient in a way that they fully understand. You need to understand that the patients might not be able to understand the medical and technical terminologies. Therefore, you must break it down to them and use easier terms to explain everything to them. The more informed the patients are, the better they would feel about the treatment. Explain all the steps of the treatment along with its benefits and disadvantages. Describe the ways the treatment can improve their health. Ensure that you are also consistent with the care and provide the same protocol and care for all your patients.

Obtaining Informed Consent

Once you start engaging in communication regarding the health of the patient and what treatment would be given and how it would help, you must also take their consent. After you have clearly described all the positive points as well as the negative points and why you feel that particular treatment is the best for them, give the patient some time to understand it and ask questions. If they want then you can also discuss alternative treatments.

After that, you must attain the signed consent of your patients before you begin the treatment. It shows that the patient was fully aware of everything and agreed to the treatment. This protects you from a lawsuit.

Making Complete and Accurate Documentation

It is essential that you take an informed consent and document each and every procedure that you are using to treat the patient. This is one of the most vital things you can do to protect yourself from a lawsuit. Documentation can actually break or make a malpractice lawsuit. In case of a lawsuit where there hasn't been any proper consent, documentation to back up the caregiver, it is highly likely that the patient wins the case. Even if the documentation is poorly maintained, it can prove negative for the care providers. This is the reason you need to maintain all documentation clearly and accurately.

Staying Current

In order to maintain your practice successfully, you need to stay updated by participating in the CMEs, workshops and conferences. During the COVID-19 era, most of the conferences are being organized using virtual platforms to keep you updated about the COVID-19 and its sequelae. You must ensure that you are aware of those medications and can easily guide your patients when they ask for help with them.

Being Prepared

It is a norm to see health care professionals rushed and distant. No matter how true this is in your case, you must make sure that you never compromise on quality care or time set for appointments. Ensure that you maintain all the files of your patients before they walk in for appointments. You must be up to speed about the condition of the patient so you can make the most of the time to provide them with quality care. Make it a point to make all patients feel special by greeting them in a cheerful mood (with a smile) calling them by their name.

Following Appropriate Procedures

Aside from maintaining a positive relationship with the patients, you must also make sure that you are following all the right procedures to avoid negligence of any form. Positive relations alone can't protect you from a lawsuit. You should also follow the right and proper practices and procedures throughout the care and treatment of your patients. This will ensure that the patient gets the best possible treatment. Even the smallest mistake can lead to

grave consequences; so you must make sure you are attentive and follow the proper medical procedure.

These are some integral things you need to consider in order to provide ultimate care to your patients and protect yourself and your practice from any malpractice or negligence lawsuits.

What Are The Most Common Types of Medical Malpractice?

These are misdiagnosis, childbirth injuries, medication errors, anesthesia errors and surgical errors. It's not to say that errors or negligence aren't present in other situations, but the majority of medical malpractice cases center around one of these reasons.

1. Misdiagnosis or Delayed Diagnosis

A patient visits a doctor because he/she doesn't feel well. They discuss the patient's medical history and current symptoms. The doctor hands the patient a diagnosis and a prescription. The problem arises when the patient's symptoms don't get better and in some cases, get worse. It may have been misdiagnosed. Misdiagnosis is a significantly common type of medical malpractice. Another issue is delayed diagnosis.

2. Childbirth Injuries

Both mother and child may sustain different types of birth injuries during delivery. An error or negligence on the part of a medical professional may occur at any time during the birthing process or, prenatal care of the mother.

A medical professional may fail to identify birth defects or misdiagnose a condition in the mother prior to the birth of the infant. There may be an error made during the birthing process itself. It doesn't matter when the negligence occurred. If a child or mother is injured during pregnancy or labor and delivery, a medical malpractice case may arise.

3. Medication Errors

According to a decades-old study, medication errors affect about 1.5 million people every year. The prescription given may be incorrect, the medication could be inappropriate for the condition or a drug may be given to the wrong patient. A medication error, however, most often occurs when a patient gets too little or too much of a drug. The doctor may write the wrong dose on the prescription, a nurse may give the wrong amount or a machine like an IV pump may malfunction.

4. Anesthesia Errors

Anesthesia mistakes can be very dangerous. The slightest error by an anesthesiologist can have devastating effects on a patient. An error can occur when a patient's full medical history is not taken, when preoperative instructions aren't given or when too much or too little anesthesia is administered during a procedure.

5. Surgical Mistakes

Surgical mistakes are perhaps the most frightening for patients. Surgical mistakes include surgery in the wrong part is performed, nerves are severed, medical instruments/cotton gauge, etc., are left behind and more. Surgical mistakes have the potential to be incredibly serious and sometimes fatal.

Again, it is important to remember that not every mistake made by a medical professional will lead to a medical malpractice lawsuit. When an error is remedied before it causes harm, it is rare that a medical malpractice case will be initiated. When a patient sustains harm at the hands of a medical professional, they have every right to seek a remedy for the damages they incur.

Take-Home Message

➢ Starting a private practice means you also need to determine the type of legal structure you want your practice to be.

➢ There are various types of legal and business entities that you can opt to practice, including Limited Liability Partnership, Public Limited Company, Sole Proprietorship and more. Each of these comes with their own set of pros and cons in terms of administration, flexibility, tax treatment and personal liability protection.

➢ It is essential to understand where exactly your legal liabilities start before you open your own private practice.

➢ It is unwise to rely on agreements or promises that are not in a written agreement between the lender and the borrower.

➢ It is best to consult a financial expert when it comes to legal contracts and financial decisions.

➢ Failing to attain an informed consent can result in professional negligence and malpractice.

➢ It is essential to start implementing strong HR policies and practices to ensure you have a positive and strong workforce and creating employee

contracts is an integral part of it.

➢ These contracts also give you better control over the work product of your employees.

➢ Being a caregiver, it is your job to ensure that all your patients feel comfortable. Therefore, honest and open communication with respect and kindness is crucial in creating a positive relationship with your patient.

Chapter 7
Licensing, Registration and NABH Requirements for Your Medical Practice

"A lawyer with his briefcase can steal more than a hundred men with guns."
(Don Corleone in The Godfather)

- Mario Puzo

Licensing and Registration for Medical Practice

Licensing and registration requirements for a medical practice may vary from state to state in India. Without a doubt, the entire process of attaining a license for medical practice and registering your business is time-consuming and challenging. However, this is one of the most crucial things that you have to do in order to ensure that you are practicing legally. Medical care providers need a medical license in order to legally practice. It is essential to learn about the laws of the state you are planning to practice in since it is possible that there might be slightly different laws for every state.

There are also possibilities of delays in getting the medical license and/or getting your practice registered due to various reasons. Therefore, you need to initiate this process as early as possible in order to open your practice to the public as per schedule.

Following are a few things that medical health care companies must consider in terms of licensing and registrations:

Registering Your Business

First things first, you need to get your medical practice registered. This is a must for any startup and possibly the first and foremost step you need to take when initiating a health care practice, especially in India. Once you have determined the legal structure for your medical practice, you can apply to register your practice.

IT Act Rules and Privacy Policy

Data protection should be among your main concerns. Since you are collecting private information of all your patients, offline and online, you

need to inform them how that data would be used and whether it would be shared with third parties. If it is being shared with third parties, you also need to share the details of that agency. Most importantly, you must ask their permission to share their data.

There also must be a privacy policy you must establish and share on your medical practice's website. A privacy policy is like a legal document that includes the details regarding the data protection means the company has taken along with other details. It informs the patients and the visitors of your website regarding the important details and protects you from any potential lawsuits.

Staff Employment Regulations

Staff must be employed only when proper credentialing is completed. Moreover, your clinic must have established rules and regulations regarding preventing sexual harassment in the workplace. As the owner of the clinic, you are also responsible for the safety of all the staff. There must be proper rules which all the staff and employees must abide by in order to protect you and your clinic against negligence or malpractice. There must be proper measures taken to protect the employees from any potential occupational health hazards.

Requirements for Signboards

In India, there are specific requirements for the signboards as per the 2002 IMC Regulations. It is important that you learn the rules for the right place, content and sign of the boards before you finalize them in order to abide by the rules no matter which country or state you are planning to open your clinic in.

Displayed Information in the Clinic

Your private practice must display the registration certification with the municipal authorities to assure your patients of your authenticity. You are also required to display the SMC/IMC registration certificate. Moreover, it is also required that you display all the charges for your services, procedures, consultation and any other treatments. Other than that, as per the 1954 Delhi Shops and Establishments Act, you must also display the closed days, open days and timings of your clinic for the ease of your patients.

Documentation to be Maintained

All medical clinics or private practices are required to maintain certain

documentation by law. Some of these documents are also required for NABH accreditation. Following are the documents that you must create and maintain regularly:

- As per the 1945 Delhi Shops and Establishments Act, you need to maintain the clinic registration with the municipal authorizes.
- Proper records of all employees, including their credentials, employment letters issued, working hours, salaries and more
- As per the 2002 IMC Regulations, you must maintain records of all the patients that have been treated and it is also essential for you to maintain a register for MLCs (Medico-Legal Cases).
- You must also maintain the register of issued medical certificates.
- All the issued copies of medical certificates must also be maintained.
- All the medical staff's registrations certificates with SMCs (State Medical Councils)
- Employees' professional qualifications (diplomas/degrees)
- As per the 2002 Delhi Narcotics Drugs Rules, you must also maintain a record of morphine consumption if applicable.
- As per the 1961 Income Tax Act, your clinic is also required to maintain all the records of the expenses and money receipts.
- You must also maintain the authorization of Bio-Medical Waste generation and category-wise generated waste as per the 1998 BMW Management Rules.

Regulations for Patients' Treatment

- There are certain regulations you need to follow for the treatment of your patients which are as follows:
- According to the 2002 IMC Regulations, you must attain a valid patient for research/treatment/investigation/examination as applicable.
- As per the law, you are also required to maintain the confidentiality of privileged information and communication.
- You are also required to keep the records and documentation of the emergency cases and the life-saving treatments employed.
- It is essential that you learn about the 1994 PNDT Act of Euthanasia usage.

- As per the 2002 IMC Regulations, there are specific rules of prescription issuance as well.
- The IMC Regulations also require you to maintain the patients' medical records for a period of three years.
- You must report any occurrence of occupational diseases to health authorities and must also report medico-legal cases to the police.
- Your clinic is responsible for the patients' safety.
- It is highly recommended that you learn the patients' rights and comply.
- Patients have the right to privacy during treatment, examination and consultation.
- It is also important that you learn about various applicable medical negligence laws, including the Indian Penal Code sections, 1986 Consumer Protection Act, Tort Law, Indian Contract Law, Respondent Superior, Consumer Protection Act and Vicarious Liability.

Regulations Regarding Trade Secrets

It is essential that you protect your patient's data as well as your trade secrets, which is why you need to ask all the employees to sign a non-disclosure agreement before they begin working so that they are legally bound to not share secret information about your clinic, patient information and other important data with anyone else.

Submitting Reports and Documentation to Health Authorities

All medical institutions, including private practices are required to submit certain reports and relevant documentation to health authorities in certain cases. These include the following:

- As per the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, you must report all cases of notifiable diseases to the state immediately.
- As per the 1954 Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, health clinics have to notify the health authorities about any food poisoning cases, if applicable.
- Any cases of injuries related to needle-stick are also required to be reported.
- As per the 1998 Biomedical Waste Management Rules, an annual report must be submitted if applicable.

Waste Management

If applicable, you are required to follow the safety disposal rules to dispose of any hazardous or infectious waste your clinic generates, according to the Environment Protection Act 1986.

Regulations Regarding Activities Conducted within the Clinic's Premises

According to the 2002 IMC Regulations, you are prohibited to conduct any unethical and illegal activities within the premises of your clinic. This includes:

- Indirect or direct soliciting the patients through self-aggrandizement, self-promotion or advertising by the institution, group of health care providers or a single health care provider
- Procuring the patients by the usage of touts
- Receiving or offering kickbacks, cutbacks, commissions, gifts or rebates in exchange for procurement or referral of patients.

Smoking in Public Places

As per the Fire Safety Regulations and 2008 Public Places Rules, it is not allowed for employees, patients or other individuals to smoke in a public place. You must adhere to this rule and ensure you place signboards forbidding individuals to smoke.

Before initiating your private practice, you must learn about all the licensing, registration, rules and regulations related to starting and maintaining a medical health practice. The more aware you are about these regulations, the more equipped you would be in maintaining and running your clinic as per the requirements by law.

NABH Accreditation

National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Providers (NABH) is a constituent board of the Quality Council of India (QCI), set up to establish and operate accreditation programs for health care organizations. The International Society for Quality in Health Care (ISQua) has accredited NABH as an organization. Readers can visit the website for details about NABH accreditation: https://www.nabh.co/Images/PDF/NABH-Pol_ProcHCO.pdf

Take-Home Message

➢ Medical care providers need a medical license in order to legally practice. Moreover, registering your private practice is also essential.

➢ You need to initiate this process as early as possible in order to open your practice to the public as per schedule as it is a time-consuming task.

➢ As the owner of the clinic, you are also responsible for the safety of all the staff members, patients and visitors.

➢ There must also be proper measures taken to protect the employees from any potential occupational health hazards.

➢ All medical clinics or private practices are required to maintain certain documentation by law.

➢ Health institutions and other businesses are prohibited to conduct any unethical and illegal activities within the premises.

➢ You must learn about all the licensing, registration and rules and regulations related to starting and maintaining a medical health practice.

➢ Offering kickbacks, cutbacks, commissions, gifts or rebates in exchange for procurement or referral of patients is strictly prohibited.

➢ Private practices are required to submit certain reports and relevant documentation to the health authorities.

➢ The occurrence of occupational diseases must immediately be reported to the health authorities and medico-legal cases must be reported to the police.

➢ Patients have the right to privacy during treatment, examination and consultation and private practice must protect their privacy.

➢ Confidentiality of privileged information and communication must be continuously maintained.

Chapter 8
Finalizing the Mission Statement and Vision for Your Medical Practice

"Good business leaders create a vision, articulate the vision, passionately own the vision, and relentlessly drive it to completion."

– Jack Welch

Importance of the Mission Statement and Vision

The mission statement and the vision statement are an integral part of an organization. It embodies what the company represents, strives to become and the direction in which it is going. Let's have a closer look at both the mission statement and the vision statement.

A mission statement is what defines the present state of the private practice or company as well as its objectives and goals. It provides relevant details regarding what the business is doing, how it is being done as well as the key players who make it work. A mission statement is for a short-term period but it is still linked to the vision statement as it highlights the main aim and goals through which the business would achieve its future goals.

A vision statement is what defines the future state of the private practice or company, what the business is hoping to become. Therefore, a vision is the long-term goal that offers a clear direction in which the business has to go. The vision statement communicates the business' purpose to its staff as well as the stakeholders and gives them inspiration and motivation to attain that particular purpose.

Here are the reasons why both the mission statement and the vision statement are important:

- The mission and vision statements offer the reason behind the company's purpose and offer a sense of belonging to all employees. These statements are the epitome of the identity of the business and hold the motto and dogma of the organization.
- The mission and vision statements describe the ways in which the

business operates. As these describe the sole means of the organizations' existence, they also act as indicators of the path which the business needs to take in order to fulfill goals that have been highlighted in both mission and vision statements.

- The mission and vision statements also act as central points for the employees through which they can identify themselves with their workplace. These statements offer them a clear direction and help them stay on the right track.
- Both of these statements help in translating the organization's objectives in work structures and for assigning tasks that must be conducted in order to achieve the organization's goals.
- The mission and vision statements offer the philosophy of the organization's existence to its staff and employees. All the hired individuals require some meaning in their work, which is exactly what mission and vision statements offer them.

These are some of the numerous reasons why creating both vision and mission statements are important for your private clinic. This would help you in sharing the measurable and primary objectives and the main purpose of your private practice with all the employees. Moreover, these statements also include the values of the organization which can be shared with all the employees. Most importantly, these statements help in keeping everyone focused in one direction which in turn is beneficial for the future of your clinic.

Creating the Right One

Once you have a clear understanding of what your private practice would do and why, it places you in the right position to begin developing both of these statements in a way that captures and showcases your ideas. When you are coming up with ideas for both the mission and vision statements, you must keep in mind that they must be enduring and broad.

If both the statements are wider in scope, it allows for a sense of continuity with the broad purposes, traditions and history of the community. These statements must be created to last so that they guide all efforts in the present and also in the future.

Making the Vision Statement

Firstly, keep in mind that in many cases it takes various vision statements to

completely capture the true essence of your private clinic. Right at the start, there is no need for a perfect phrase. Avoid pressurizing yourself. Begin with the process of brainstorming as it is the most effective way of generating good ideas. You can involve all the present employees or your partners in this process. Write down each and every idea, highlight the main points you want to project in the statement and discuss each other's ideas. You will soon realize that brainstorming cultivates the ideas and take them to the next level, especially if it is a group session.

Once enough ideas have been formed, you can start narrowing them down by selecting the best ones from them. This will help you in highlighting the best ones and ask people to pick the best ones from them to further narrow them down.

If you still don't think any of the phrases are good enough, you can again have a brainstorming session. Have a look at the vision statements of other companies or private practices. These can work as inspirations to you and help you in coming up with better ideas for your own vision statement.

However, you must keep in mind that the vision statement should represent what your clinic stands for. So, make sure that you don't get too influenced by other companies' vision statements. One way to avoid this is to keep a list of your objectives and goals with you when you are coming up with ideas so that you are on the right track.

Keep on brainstorming for more ideas as this is how something would jump right out at you and feel absolutely perfect as your vision. It is best to keep the following questions in mind:

- Would this phrase motivate and encourage people to work for a common goal?
- Would this statement provide hope during hard times for an improved future?
- Would it work as an inspiration for the entire staff to achieve the goals through effective and positive actions?

There is no need to use fancy words or phrases. Keep it simple and precise so that everyone can relate to it and get inspired by it, which is exactly what a vision statement is all about.

Mission Statement

The method of creating a mission statement is similar to that of creating the vision statement. This process also requires the same brainstorming sessions in order to come up with ideas for the right mission statement. However, you need to keep in mind that even though there can be multiple vision statements for your private practice, the mission statement must be only one.

Once you have followed the same brainstorming process for creating this statement too and have generated a few good ideas, you must answer the following questions to further narrow down your choices:

- Would this statement perfectly narrate what your private practice does, would do and why?
- Is the statement concise?
- Is the statement result-oriented?
- Does the statement include the people and goals that are integral for the practice?

These questions will help you in coming up with the right mission statement that meets all the requirements of your private practice.

We are sharing the Mission Statement of SuVi Eye Hospital & Lasik Laser Center, Kota (Figure 8.1):

SuVi Eye Hospital
Competent Care with Compassion
An ISO 9001:2008 Certified Hospital
SUVI EYE HOSPITAL & LASIK LASER CENTER
Competent Care with Compassion
MISSION & VISION STATEMENT
The doctors, staff and management of SUVI EYE HOSPITAL & LASIK LASER CENTER are committed to provide the best possible treatment in the field of eye care to all patients based on the following guiding principles-
People - Dignified treatment for everyone; Respect for our patients and our team.
Communication - Complete information to the patient.
Service Excellence – Our desire is to exceed your expectations.
Honesty - Utmost transparency.
Responsibility – We accept responsibility for all our work and any human failings.
Quality – We are committed to provide the best care for every eye through well-trained doctors from the best institutes, latest technology and continuous upgradation.
Feedback- We welcome your suggestions to maintain and improve our quality.
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Useful Tips to Create Right Statements

Following are some useful tips that can help you in creating an effective mission statement and vision statement for your private practice:

1. The statements must reflect the goals and objectives of your private practice and describe what you and your practice stands for - both externally (community, patients, patients' families) and internally (direct stakeholders and staff). It must sum up the priorities of the company and

share the culture of your organization.

2. For the mission statement, four main elements are crucial – specificity, plausibility, inspiration and value. You need to convey all these four elements in a short and precise sentence. It is important that the statement showcases the value of your practice, the reason for its existence, acts as inspiration and motivates all the staff. It must be relevant, specific and reasonable.

3. In order to create effective statements, ask yourself the following important questions:

- What should be the expectations of the staff and other employees regarding their workplace?
- Who are your target patients and in what way can your private practice enhance their life?
- Which are the values that are integral for the practice? Which morals and beliefs you want to be practiced in the workplace and how will you apply them? Are there any specific ethical standards and regulations you want to employ? What are the founding principles upon which you have based your practice?
- In what ways would you define your success? How would you measure it? In what ways are you planning to achieve it?

4. Both of the statements must summarize concisely the unique positioning of your private practice, both externally and internally. It is essential that you restrict the statements to a single or a maximum of two sentences. Keep on revising the statements till all the points are clearly and quickly projected. Ensure that the statements are effective and memorable. It must include your private practice’s main aim and purpose.

5. It is essential that you create both vision and mission statements by incorporating the views and opinions of your partners and team. This will enable you to not just create a comprehensive and better statement but this will make your staff be more invested in the goals of your practice since they were the ones who helped in creating the vision and mission of the company. Since your mission and vision statements reflect the purpose and aims of your practice, if you are transparent with the staff, then it would project a better and more effective message.

You must remember that the mission and vision statements are not merely

created one time. These can be reviewed and changed as your private practice starts growing and progressing. Once it starts to prosper and your practice starts achieving its goals, soon it would be time to create newer goals and objectives and hence, revision of the mission and vision statements. But, it is important that even when these statements are revised, the overall identity and culture of the private practice stays the same.

Take-Home Message

➢ A mission statement is what defines the present state of the private practice or company as well as its objectives and goals.

➢ A vision statement is what defines the future state of the private practice or company, what the business is hoping to become.

➢ The mission and vision statements embody what the company represents, strives to become and the direction it is going.

➢ This would help you in sharing the measurable and primary objectives and the main purpose of your private practice with all the employees.

➢ Begin with the process of brainstorming as it is the most effective way of generating good ideas.

➢ Write down each and every idea, highlight the main points you want to project in the statement and discuss each other’s ideas.

➢ Keep a list of your objectives and goals with you when you are coming up with ideas so that you are on the right track.

➢ Keep both statements simple and precise so that everyone can relate to them and get inspired by it.

➢ It is important that the statement showcases the value of your practice and the reason for its existence; it should act as an inspiration and motivate all the staff.

➢ These mission and vision statements must be revised accordingly as your private practice starts growing and prospering with the achievement of the goals.

Part II
Looking at the Big Picture

Chapter 9
Operational Processes, Procedures and Practices

"A company can seize extra-ordinary opportunities only if it is very good at the ordinary operations."

– Marcel Telles

Determining the Payment Methods

This is another important factor you would have to decide before opening the doors of your private clinic for the patients. It is important to offer a payment structure that is convenient for the patients and is also beneficial for you. Moreover, you must also keep on reviewing it in order to ensure that you incorporate the payment preferences of your patients and to determine if you are fulfilling the needs of your patients and your business.

This is crucial as it will ensure that you can manage and effectively maintain your private practice's cash flow. All the payment methods come with their own set of advantages and disadvantages. There isn't anyone right payment method that you can choose. The best one is the method that fulfills your business' needs and also meets the requirements of your patients.

You must go through all the pros and cons of various payment methods and determine how well they meet your requirements and needs and how it affects your patients before making your final decision. For instance, if you opt for cash, then it has the benefit of being reliable and anonymous. However, it also comes with an increased risk of theft and can be expensive to handle. Alternatively, opting for credit or debit card payments offer a decreased theft risk and are quick. However, you need the equipment, electricity and also have to pay its fee.

Here are a few questions you can ponder on when deciding the mode of payment:

- What would be the preferences of your patients when paying for your services and treatments?
- Would you need to quickly access funds now and then in order to

maintain your business?

- Would there be a need to follow-up on patients regarding the payments?
- What is the total amount that is required in all the methods of payment you are considering?
- Would there be any delays in distributing and purchasing the inventory and payment received?

Aside from answering the above questions, there are a few other things you must take into consideration including:

- **Patient Preferences –** When you offer the mode of payment preferred by your patients, you are more likely to receive the payment in time. The most preferred and common mode of payment is via debit or credit cards.
- **Risk –** You of course have to ponder over the risks that come with the selected mode of payment. Ensure that you consider all the aspects and their impact on your private practice.
- **Privacy –** There are certain modes of payment that offer more privacy than others. For instance, all the transactions are instantly recorded when payment is made via credit cards. There may be some patients who would rather pay with cash for medical treatments to maintain their privacy.
- **Service Charges –** Credit and debit card providers typically charge a specific amount as service charges which can either be per transaction or monthly charges.
- **Cost of Transactions –** In some payment methods, there might be a percentage or specific amount of transaction cost for every transaction. You would also have to determine the volume of transaction that you are anticipating, the average amount of the transaction and would also have to consider the added services you would opt for and their charges.
- **Dependency on Telecommunications and Electrical Infrastructure –** There may be certain modes of payment that rely on electricity or phone network which means, if these systems are down, then the selected modes of payment would not be available.
- **Growth –** You also need to determine what your future goals are. What are the processes, systems or technologies that you would want to integrate into your practice eventually? You need to realize that the financial world is rapidly changing. Hence, it is best to conduct thorough

research to create a future-proof payment method for your private practice. Indeed, you can always switch payment providers, but this also means investing more time and effort. A better and more effective way is to determine your future needs as well as your current needs so that you can make the right choice.

- **Speed –** All the means of payments utilize various partnerships, networks and technology stacks which indicate that there could be a variation in the level of speed they would offer. For your patients, the speed of transactions would be important. There are certain payment gateways that don't have the required capacity to perform the transactions instantly which leaves your customer waiting. However, at the backhand, the speed of settlement determines how fast you would be receiving the funds. Even though the speed of a payment mode can be complex to evaluate, it is still a crucial consideration.
- **Additional Value –** Aside from conveying the transaction information, payment gateways also offer certain additional value services. A service like effective reporting can result in drastically enhancing your profits and sales or fraud detection can reduce the likelihood of fraud cases and chargebacks.

These are some of the main considerations you would have to ponder before you make the final selection of the payment method.

Figuring out Payment Options for Patients

You can offer your patients specific payment plans to make it more convenient for them to pay for your services and treatments. A payment plan is like an agreement between your patient and your practice which spreads out the treatment costs in management amounts over a specific number of days, weeks or months. When opting for payment plans, it is best to get some legal help in order to make contracts that include all the necessary details like penalties for missed payments, payment terms and the time and duration of expected payment to be completed. Creating a legal document ensures that the interests of both parties are secured and protected and also acts as proof for later date payment if required.

These payment plans are beneficial when expensive treatments and services are being used which are what your patients need but they cannot afford to make the full payment instantly. If you want to offer payment plans or opt for

one, the treatment is done; but instead of upfront, it is best to ensure that your patients first make a non-refundable deposit to confirm their reservation and to avoid cancellation. Once a deposit is made, the patient is encouraged to go through the entire treatment process and avoid missing any appointments. This also enhances the flow of cash and helps in predicting the business finances for the course of a few months.

Aside from payment plans, financing can also be offered to your patients. Finances break down the total treatment cost into manageable sections, typically by borrowing the amount upfront and then returning the amount in a specific time period with interest. This service is offered by various companies who are responsible for evaluating your patient's financial situation before they approve the loan for the treatment. Providing this option to your patients who can't afford to pay upfront for the cost of the treatment, will help them in getting the right treatment they need at the right time without worrying about making upfront payments.

Opting for this option means that your private practice will be getting the complete treatment cost upfront. This removes the risk that comes with payment plans like payments missed. However, it is best to conduct proper research before you opt for this service. There are certain companies that put penalties on the clinic or company if the patients/clients fail to make the payment, which means, offering this plan might not be beneficial for you.

Modes of Payments

There are numerous modes of payment you can offer your patients. You can even opt for two to three of these for the ease of your patients. Following are the most common and preferred ones:

Cash

There are numerous individuals for whom medical procedures and treatments are a private matter, which is something that would be considered when determining the payment method. Some of your patients might want to make cash payments so that the name of the clinic doesn't show in their statements or bills. Nevertheless, it is essential that your practice declares all of the payments made with cash so as not to be viewed as fraud. Any private practice or clinic that is caught doing fraudulent activities would be penalized by law and would of course lose its credibility with its patients.

When offering cash payment as the payment method, you also need to

consider the fact that there are plenty of chances for mistakes and human error to occur, especially if you receive a large number of patients and payments every day. If you deal with a large amount of money every day, then you would also have to consider setting up security measures and a safe storage place so as to avoid any possibilities of theft. In order to reduce this risk, it is best to create a safe which is heavy-duty to store the cash till it is deposited in a bank. Other alternatives include lockable safes, drop safes or drop boxes that have a drawer or slot at the top to deposit cash quickly. Moreover, it is also best to hire security services and install surveillance cameras throughout your clinic to enhance the security and safety of your patients, staff and the overall premises.

Card Payments

If you are opting for card payments, then you also have to consider the card providers' fees or charges when deciding the pricing of your treatments. These service charges vary and depend on card providers and circumstances. There are many businesses that tackle this by charging the patients or clients to make the card payment but a majority of the companies add the card fees to the bill.

Visa and MasterCard have a comparatively lower charge for merchants, but other credit and debit card charges may be as high as 3% to 5% for each transaction. The higher cost is associated with the other privileges and perks that come with using those cards. Therefore, when you determine the card payments you want to take at your clinic, it is best to start with Visa and MasterCard and once you have earned a steady stream of patients, you can actually conduct a survey about which credit or debit cards they would want your private practice to accept. Indeed, there is no pleasing each one of them, but you can provide what the majority of your patients prefer.

Online Payment

The online payment option has gained a lot of popularity due to its ease. There are more and more patients who are opting to pay online for the consultation, services or treatment they receive at a hospital, clinic or private practice, whether if it is done through services like PayPal or through the clinic's website. This is an effective mode of payment if you are opting to offer an online portal through which your patients can book appointments, get their reports and set appointment reminders. This is an easy and quick way of making and receiving payments. This also enables you and your staff

to maintain an updated online portal of clients and review their history when needed. You can further enhance your overall intake of patients and appointments by keeping track of the appointments, sending reminders and/or rescheduling missed appointments. Moreover, it also allows better control of your patients over treatment plans and payment options.

Cheque

This might seem like an antiquated means of payment but it might be helpful for a few patients. Whilst cheque are an effective means of payment through posts or among businesses, they are also considered the least reliable payment means. These can be forged easily, lost or bounced. This means your financial books would end up unbalanced due to unpaid payments.

Each and every mode of payment has its own downfalls and benefits. However, with concise and clear guidelines, it can be made easier and quicker for both your patients and staff. Ensure that your employees are well-trained and are aware of the methods of payment that your practice is offering. Make sure they are informed enough to effectively guide all the patients who are confused or concerned regarding the payment methods. If the patients are properly guided about the financial options available to them, it enhances their satisfaction and trust in your private practice.

Importance of Payment Policy

There are many cases in which patients come to the clinic or private practice, get the treatment they need and even walk away with various free samples without making the payment. Surprised? This indeed happens many times to various clinics and private practices. Ensuring that the patients make the payment on time is not an easy task. This is the reason it is essential to place a payment policy. This ensures that the patient makes the payment on time without you having to keep on sending constant reminders and appearing unsympathetic.

Essentials of Payment Policy

Your payment policy helps to share your expectations with your patients, including what you expect from them and what they should expect from you. A policy that has been well-crafted explains clearly the financial obligations of the patients. Moreover, it also provides you with legal protection in case any of the patients fail to make the payment they are entitled to pay.

There are numerous things that make up a payment policy. You must ensure

that you have highlighted all the important points you want to share with your patients regarding payments so that they are fully aware of their obligations. It is best to first note everything down and then start writing your policy to avoid missing anything important.

When preparing a payment policy for your private practice, ensure you include the following elements:

- The due date of the payment
- Who is responsible for the payment (the entire amount is to be paid by the patient or their insurance plans or a specific amount that isn't covered by the insurance is to be paid by the patient)
- Ways in which deductibles and co-pays would be handled
- Mode of payment accepted by your practice
- Policy regarding nonpayment
- Steps to be taken in case of missed appointments

More important information can be included in the payment policy, including discounts or deals for self-paying patients. Finalize your payment policy and get legal help to go through it to improve it or tackle any mistakes or loopholes. Once you have a payment policy in place, hand it out to all the patients and ensure that they read it and understand it before they sign it. This document can prove rather useful in the future in case any problem arises.

Take-Home Message

➢ Offering a payment structure that is convenient for the patients and is also beneficial for you, is another crucial decision you must make.

➢ You must go through all the pros and cons of various payment methods and determine how well they meet your requirements and needs and how it affects your patients before making your final decision.

➢ The most preferred and common mode of payment is via debit or credit cards.

➢ However, there may be some patients who would rather pay with cash for medical treatments to maintain their privacy.

➢ Specific payment plans can also be offered to your patients to make it more convenient for them to pay for your services and treatments.

➢ Finance plans break down the total treatment cost into manageable

sections, typically by borrowing the amount upfront and then returning the amount in a specific time period with interest.

➢ There are numerous methods of payments you can offer your patients like cash, credit cards, etc. You can even opt for two to three of these for the ease of your patients.

➢ Your payment policy helps in sharing your expectations with your patients, including what you expect from them and what they should expect from you.

Chapter 10
Insurance Requirements for Medical Practice

"Everyone experiences tough times; it is a measure of your determination and dedication how you deal with them and how you can come through them."

– Lakshmi Mittal

Running a private practice is not an easy task; there are many challenges that are bound to come your way. Right before you even open your doors to patients, you are exposed to various liabilities. This is the reason why you need to protect yourself and your business and get the right insurance. Just one mistake or a single lawsuit can completely destroy your new medical practice before you even begin getting it off the ground.

Litigations against doctors are becoming more common now. According to a survey by the American Medical Association, more than 65 percent of doctors over the age of 55 say they have been sued at least once. While only five percent of doctors are sued yearly, the longer a doctor remains in practice, the greater the chances are that they will be sued at some point. Male doctors are twice as likely to be sued as female doctors. One reason for this is that male physicians are concentrated in medical fields that are most likely to be sued for malpractice. There are also currently greater numbers of older male doctors who are more likely to have been sued than younger female doctors.

There are various types of insurances that businesses need to protect against liabilities. Here are some of the major insurances that you must consider for your private practice (Figure 10.1):

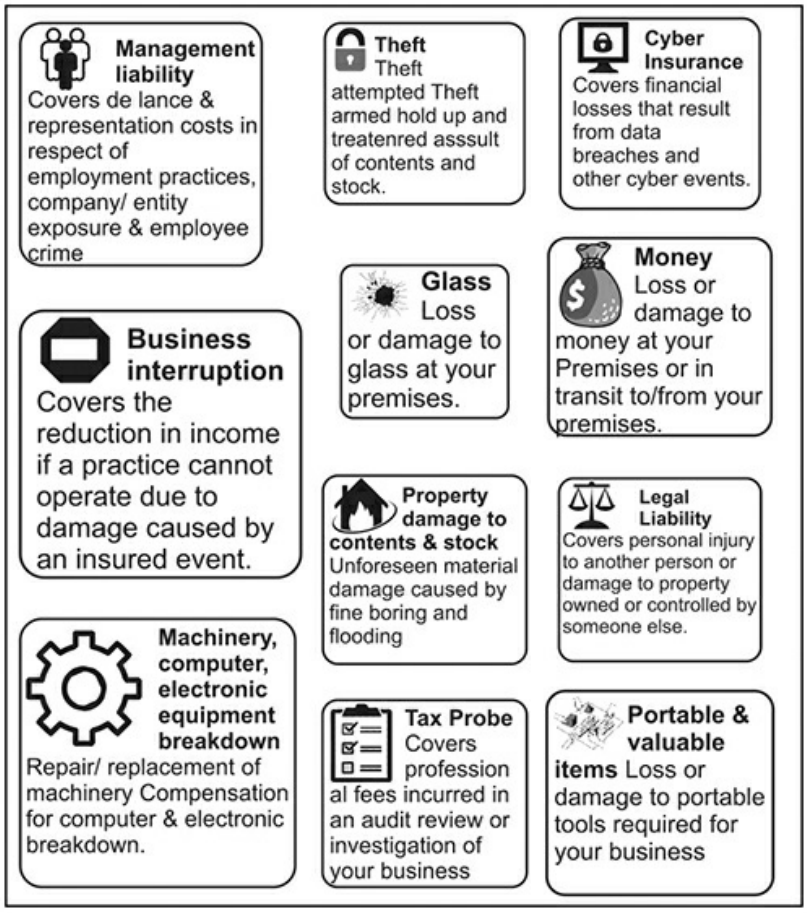

Management liability
Covers de lance & representation costs in respect of employment practices, company/ entity exposure & employee crime
Theft
Theft attempted Theft armed hold up and treatenred asssult of contents and stock.
Cyber Insurance
Covers financial losses that result from data breaches and other cyber events.
Glass
Loss or damage to glass at your premises.
Money
Loss or damage to money at your Premises or in transit to/from your premises.
Business interruption
Covers the reduction in income if a practice cannot operate due to damage caused by an insured event.
Property damage to contents & stock
Unforeseen material damage caused by fine boring and flooding
Legal Liability
Covers personal injury to another person or damage to property owned or controlled by someone else.
Machinery, computer, electronic equipment breakdown
Repair/ replacement of machinery Compensation for computer & electronic breakdown.
Tax Probe
Covers professional fees incurred in an audit review or investigation of your business
Portable & valuable items
Loss or damage to portable tools required for your business

Figure 10.1: Insurance Requirements for Medical Practice

Property Insurance

You spend countless effort, time and financial resources to open your private practice – getting the right fixtures, furniture, medical supplies, equipment and whatnot. You did everything possible to make it perfect and comfortable for your patients. However, do you have a plan to replace or fix all of that in case your practice is destroyed due to a natural disaster or some other accident?

Scary, isn't it?

Property insurance is what you need to protect your practice and cover the cost in case of any damage due to theft, accident or natural disasters. This coverage protects both the property of your private practice (things that are crucial for your business, like computers, inventory, equipment, etc.) as well as the physical space of the practice. No matter whether you own the place or have rented it out, you cannot neglect getting property insurance.

Auto Insurance

There are many private medical practices that also provide house calls to their patients. This is especially for health care providers who have the flexibility and resources to make house calls. If you are also offering house calls and drive your own car or have a specific car solely for this purpose, you must consider getting commercial or business auto insurance. If you are using your personal car and have personal vehicle insurance, you must keep in mind that those policies might not fully cover the damage cost of vehicles that are being used for business purposes.

Therefore, you need commercial or business auto insurance coverage. This will cover the costs of property damage, body damage and other costs. As per the policy of your insurance, you would be covered for repairs or might get a replacement vehicle because of damage from theft, accidents or any other incident.

Workers Compensation Insurance

Since you are opening a private medical practice, you would not only have to perform the duties of a medical practitioner but would also be responsible to tackle all the duties that come with being an owner. Of course, you won't be able to perform all the tasks all by yourself and have to hire other medical health providers and other employees. However, there are plenty of possibilities of your hired employees and staff getting hurt on the job. It is important for you to attain workers' compensation insurance coverage.

This insurance will cover the medical expenses and/or replace the lost wage of the employees who suffer injuries during work, no matter whose fault it was. Keep in mind that even if all or most of the employees at your private practice are responsible for low-impact or low-risk jobs, there are still plenty of possibilities of injuries or medical conditions that can lead to legal claims that would prove to be expensive.

This is something that you can't possibly overlook which is the reason workers' compensation insurance is another important coverage you need to consider.

Business Interruption Insurance

This is dependent on the location of your private practice. You might be located in a place that has more likelihood of experiencing natural disasters like tornadoes, hurricanes or earthquakes. In case of such a catastrophic or

disastrous event, the operations of your private practice are bound to be interrupted. Naturally, you would want to get the operations up and running as soon as possible. For this, you would need business interruption insurance.

This insurance is not the same as property insurance as this insurance covers the loss of income because of the business being closed due to a disaster or due to structural rebuilding after a disaster. However, there are many insurance providers who merge both property insurance and business interruption insurance to create a package. It is best to discuss the coverage you require with your insurance provider to get the right one for your private practice.

Life Insurance

This might not appear related directly to your private practice but it is still a crucial insurance coverage you must consider getting. In case you pass away, how will your loved ones tackle their finances, especially if they are completely dependent on you?

Life insurance provides a certain amount to your beneficiaries in case of your passing away which can help your dependents financially. This insurance is especially beneficial for your peace of mind, for the stable future of your family and even for your business partner. It can help in unburdening your loved ones from suffering financial losses or constraints after you are gone.

Practice Overhead Insurance

In a situation in which you can no longer practice medicine because of an illness or injury, you are most likely to opt for individual disability insurance. This offers you financial protection but if you aren’t able to practice medicine, how will your patients be treated and how can your clinic continue being operational?

This is when practice overhead insurance comes in. This coverage can cover some of your practice’s expenses like taxes, salaries, rent, utility bills and other costs. This will ensure that your business keeps running and your income doesn’t suffer while you recover from the injury or illness.

With the right insurance plans, you would be able to protect your private practice from experiencing any financial losses due to natural disasters or lawsuits. Ensure that you attain all the necessary details, figure out the kind of coverage you need before you make the decision.

Take-Home Message

➢ Even before you even open your doors to patients, you are exposed to various liabilities against which you need protection.

➢ Just one mistake or a single lawsuit can completely destroy your new medical practice before you even begin getting it off the ground.

➢ Professional liability insurance protects your private practice in case of a lawsuit filed by a patient claiming negligence.

➢ Property insurance is what you need to protect your practice and cover the cost in case of any damages due to theft, accident or natural disasters.

➢ Commercial or business auto insurance coverage covers the costs of property damage, body damage and other costs in case of accidents while you are making house calls.

➢ Workers' compensation insurance covers the cost of any injuries sustained by your employees and staff during the job.

➢ In case of a catastrophic or disastrous event, the operations of your private practice are bound to be interrupted. Naturally, you would want to get the operations up and running as soon as possible. For this, you would need business interruption insurance.

➢ Life insurance provides a certain amount of money to your beneficiaries in case of your passing away which can help your dependents financially.

➢ Practice overhead insurance covers some of your practice's expenses like taxes, salaries, rent, utility bills and other costs when you are unable to practice medicine temporarily in case of an injury or illness.

Chapter 11
How to Select the Perfect Location for Medical Practice?

"Create a definite plan for carrying out your desire and begin at once, whether you are ready or not, to put this plan into action."

– Napoleon Hill

Selecting the Location for the Practice

The location of your private practice is another integral decision you would have to make like the business owner. The right location of your practice can help in growing and prospering the business as it can cater to the right target audience. There are plenty of factors involved in deciding the right location to establish your private practice.

Here is how you can select the right location:

Determine the Must-Haves

It is important that you create a list of must-have things that you want from the location of your practice. These may include:

- Time of commute – Being a medical care provider, you must be well aware of the importance of time. Therefore, living far away from your clinic is not a wise choice. You need to ensure that there is a minimum commute time from your home to your clinic. This will enable you to reach your clinic quickly and spend more time with your patients.
- Locale – Your private practice must be at a location where your target patients can easily access it. Establishing your practice in a place far away or at an inconvenient place would mean fewer patients would consider coming for your services.
- Visibility – Make sure that you select a place from which your private practice is easily visible.
- Budget – Indeed you would have to consider your budget before you select the location. Determine how much you can afford and then start looking for places that come within your price range.

There could be several more things you might want from your perfect location; pen everything down and then start looking for the right place for your private practice.

Demographics

You need to determine your target patients and their attributes. This can be done by focusing on their demographics. It will help ensure that you are establishing your private institution in a locality which has no shortage of your target patients. Here are a few things you need to factor in:

- **Age –** Based on your initial research, you probably already have determined the right age group of your target patients. Now you need to ensure that you are situated in a place where the right age group can reach you. For instance, if you are a pediatrician, the best place to open up your private practice would be near a residential area that is mostly occupied by families. Make sure to examine the population of the location you are considering; whether it is an area that attracts your target patients and if the target patient population is likely to grow or not.
- **Income –** This is another indicator that can help you select the right location. With the range of average income of your target patients in mind, you can identify the right location to open your private practice so that people residing nearby can afford your services and treatments.

Building

The design, condition and exterior of the building also play a vital role when deciding the right place for your practice. Here are some main factors you must consider:

- **Exterior –** The exterior is the first thing your patients are going to notice and will form the first impression of your private practice. That is why you need to ensure that the exterior of the building is not shabby looking as this might not give a good impression. Ensure that it is clean, has good aesthetics and is strong.
- **Parking –** This is vital for the ease of your patients. You are not going to receive more patients if they have a hard time finding a parking space. Instead of wasting their time looking for a suitable parking space, they would rather go to another health provider. Therefore, you must ensure that there is sufficient parking space in the building for your patients.
- **Elevator –** If you are not based on the ground floor, then an elevator to

your floor is a must. Don’t expect your patients to climb a flight of stairs to avail your services. Ensure that the building has a working elevator so that your patients can easily enter your practice.

Interior

Aside from the exterior of your building, the interior of your private practice would also be a significant factor in forming a good impression. Here are a few main factors that you must consider:

- **Aesthetics –** The minute a patient enters your practice, he/she starts forming a specific image of you and your services. This is why it is important to have a good interior that provides a pleasant experience for the patients. Provide sufficient and comfortable seating arrangement in the waiting area; ensure there is enough ventilation to make it comfortable for everyone; place newspapers, magazines and a television set in the waiting room for your patient’s entertainment while they wait for their turn. You can also decorate the place with informative pictures and charts.
- **Washrooms –** Your private practice must have enough washrooms which must be clean at all times for both the patients and the staff.
- **Size of the office –** The size you have in mind for your clinic, try finding a place which is at least 20% bigger than it. This is because it will offer you extra space to accommodate the growing needs of the practice. Once you start receiving more and more patients, you will have to add more seating areas for more examination rooms. This is why extra space would be beneficial.

Deciding to Rent or Buy

This is one thing you might have a hard time deciding whether to buy the space for your private practice or rent it out. This decision can be rather hard but can become easy if you focus on your needs and requirements. Here are some of the factors you should consider to make the right decision:

Money Factor

When you are starting out with your practice, it is highly possible that you have a limited amount of funds. This means it could get hard for you to buy the place unless you have been keeping a separate fund account for it. When you are renting a place, you don’t have to pay a large amount upfront as opposed to the amount you have to pay up when you purchase the place. You need to keep in mind the costs associated with buying the place including

loan fees, inspection fees, appraisal fees, property insurance and more. All of this is supposed to be paid upfront. On the other hand, when renting out the place, you have to pay the month's rent and the security deposit upfront.

Variable and Fixed Costs

When you purchase the office space, you know the total amount of cost you would have to pay each year beforehand. This is especially beneficial if you have taken out a fixed-rate loan. But you need to keep in mind the refinance costs which depend on the term of your loan. In the case of renting out, the amount might change if the owner decides to increase the rent or when the term of the lease expires. There are various leases that include a clause that allows for an annual increase in rent. It is essential to keep in mind all these factors.

The Factor of Growth

Finding a space that is the perfect size for your private practice might seem like a dream come true right now, but in the coming years, your practice will hopefully grow and then that perfect size might not seem so perfect. It is not easy to keep on changing your place every few years due to size constraints. This is the reason why you need to be practical about determining whether you should rent a place or buy it. When you rent out a place, it would be easier for you to switch to a newer place or even buy one once your practice starts growing and you have a better idea of where your practice is going.

If you buy the place now, it would be harder to sell it and then buy another bigger place just in a few years. However, if you are planning to buy a building or space that is double or triple the size you now require, you can lease out the extra space for now and later expand as your business grows.

Take-Home Message

➢ The right location of your practice can help in growing and prospering the business as it can cater to the right target audience.

➢ You need to ensure that there is a minimum commute time from your home to your clinic.

➢ Establishing your practice in a place far away or at an inconvenient place would mean fewer patients would consider coming for your services.

➢ You need to ensure that you are situated at a place where the right age group of target patients can reach you.

➢ Make sure to examine the population of the location you are considering; whether it is an area that attracts your target patients and if the target patient population is likely to grow or not.

➢ The exterior is the first thing your patients are going to notice and will form the first impression of your private practice. It is essential to make sure that the exterior is pleasing to the eye.

➢ There must be sufficient parking space in the building for your patients as well as for your employees.

➢ Provide sufficient and comfortable seating arrangements in the waiting area and ensure there is enough ventilation to make it comfortable for everyone present in your practice.

➢ Buying or renting the space for your private practice is not an easy decision, but can become simpler if you focus on your needs and requirements.

Chapter 12
How to Establish Realistic Goals for Your Medical Practice?

"The trouble with not having a goal is that you can spend your life running up and down the field and never score."

– Bill Copeland

Creating Effective Annual and Quarterly Goals

Setting goals might not be an easier task as it seems. There are many businesses that set up yearly goals, leave it and are almost never able to meet those goals. The main reason behind this is that those annual goals aren't actionable and/or might seem overwhelming, which is why no one bothers to follow them.

The key to establishing the right goals and to making them achievable is to break them down into smaller goals, making them less complex and intimidating. Distribute your annual goals into half-yearly and quarterly goals to have better control over the working of your practice. Breaking down your goals drastically increases the chance of successfully achieving those goals.

In order to create effective annual and quarterly goals for your private practice, utilize the following steps:

Step 1: Visualizing the Bigger Picture

Firstly, start with your annual goal. Determine where you see your private practice in a year. Figure out the initiatives you would have to take throughout the year in order to achieve that goal. This may include reaching a certain target revenue, successfully treating a certain number of patients, enhancing your reach by a specific percentage and so on.

Keep in mind, however, that you need to set a realistic and attainable goal otherwise the entire goal-setting strategy may actually backfire on you.

Step 2: Breaking Down the Goal in Quarterly Segmentations

Next is the breakdown of your goal. Break it down into four parts which

would represent each quarter of the entire year. It is important that you set deadlines for each quarter and your expectations from each quarter. Further, break those milestones down into monthly goals. This would make it even easier and realistic to achieve those goals.

Aside from this, you also need to determine who is responsible to do what. Each employee and staff member must be aware of their targets and the expectations you have from them. This is the reason why at the time of setting goals, you need to properly highlight the people involved, their goals and responsibilities, the resources and skills required, as well as the expected time for completion of each goal.

Once you have everything figured out and clearly planned, only then you would be able to share it with your staff members and explain their parts effectively. When each member of your practice knows and understands the roles they have to play, along with the time duration, they would be motivated to achieve their targets within the time frame.

Step 3: Planning Meetings, Reviews and Milestones

In order to ensure that all employees of your practice are playing their part properly, you must hold meetings, reviews and evaluations in order to assess their milestones and progress. This will help in making sure that everyone is heading in the right direction and there aren’t any problems being faced.

These meetings should be conducted every month to get regular updates on the progress. In case of any issues, you and your staff can discuss possible solutions and brainstorm ideas to get back on track. More meetings, if needed, can be held accordingly in case of any concern.

Step 4: Focusing on Collaboration and Communication

In order to enhance the level of collaboration and communication, you should also hold a team meeting with each department of your private practice. This further ensures that the entire practice is heading in the same direction and further smoothens out any issues that each department might be facing. This will also help you assess the progress of the goals and ensure that you can achieve the quarterly goals you set at the start of the year.

Step 5: Making Adjustments

It is highly possible that as you and your team move forward, you will face a number of issues, both big and small. Even though most of them can be resolved immediately, there might be a few issues that could delay the

progress towards the goals that have been set. Moreover, it is also possible that as you move forward, you realize that the goals you set are too overwhelming or underwhelming. In these situations, you can make adjustments to all the goals or change your strategies to help meet those goals.

It is also possible that some of the goals might turn out to be complex and tricky which means you can further break them down into even smaller goals. There might be certain projects that you might have to delay or cancel due to various unavoidable reasons. There might be newer tasks and projects that you might want to take on. These changes must be adjusted accordingly to ensure all processes of your private practice keep on going smoothly.

Furthermore, as you make these changes, you would also have to keep your employees updated. It is essential to keep them informed about the changes being made, the reasons behind them and how their roles might change. If you don't inform your staff beforehand, it is highly possible that you experience resistance from them. Change is never easy. Therefore, let them know there might be changes happening due to unavoidable reasons so that they can prepare themselves instead of dropping the bomb on them at the last minute.

Step 6: Monitoring and Reviewing

Lastly, you also need to constantly monitor the progress of each department in order to make overall progress. The initial goal making strategy you make when you launch your private practice can indeed be followed in the coming years. However, as your private practice starts growing, you must make necessary changes and additions to the strategies and goals.

At the end of each quarter, you must also hold review meetings with all employees to check their progress. In these meetings, the targets should be revised as per the progress made, newer milestones should be set and goals made by discussing it with each employee individually, along with their supervisors. This way, the employees also have their say in the workload. They can also discuss the issues they are facing and make suggestions.

This will give you a better idea about where each of your team members stands, their strengths and their weaknesses. You can further hold training sessions to polish those skills and tackle those weaknesses. Moreover, you would be able to assign tasks more efficiently after understanding the skill set

of all employees.

Management of Quarterly Goals

Here are a few tips that can help you in managing the quarterly goals of your private practice:

- Ensure that all the goals and milestones you set for every quarter are specific and actionable. The actions to be taken in order to achieve those goals should also be highlighted. Other than that, it is also essential to define the resources required, the time needed and the people involved to achieve those goals and milestones.
- Utilize the various tools and apps for collaboration, project management, scheduling and planning that are available online to keep a tab on all of those goals and other details. These online tools make the entire process of your online practice manageable and easier. It adds efficiency in all the strategies since it also enhances collaboration and communication within the organization. These resources also make it convenient to keep everyone in the loop and make sure that everyone is up-to-date about the changes or additions that have been made.
- Make sure that you don’t set up yourself and your employees for failure by establishing too many goals and targets that are unrealistic. It is easy to lose yourself in the dream of success but you must be realistic when you set goals. Realistic and attainable goals are the only way you can achieve success, otherwise, you are setting your practice for a downfall which will also discourage and decrease the motivation levels of your employees.

Once you start establishing your goals for the quarter, you will notice how efficiently and faster your private practice is progressing. This is the reason it is better to break down your annual goals which become one of the best motivators for you and the entire team.

Deciding Weekly and Daily Goals

What makes goals even easier to attain when you break them down into quarterly and monthly goals? When you break them down further into short-term weekly and daily goals, that’s when you can utilize the SMART goals strategy that was discussed in the action planning previously.

Setting SMART goals are a perfect way of ensuring that you are establishing the right goals for your private practice and for the entire team. The best thing to do is to establish these goals by discussing them with the

supervisors and their teammates in every department. Doing this keeps the employees in the loop which makes them feel more in control of their progress.

This will also help you in tackling any problems faced in any of the departments of your practice or faced by any of your employees. This too can be tackled by communicating more effectively with the employees. The best way to do this is by holding brainstorming sessions to come up with the right solutions. This also works as an effective team-building exercise.

Since you already have created monthly goals, it would be easier to distribute those goals further into weekly and daily goals with the help of your employees. The motivation levels of the employees will further increase since they are the ones who would be setting their goals for every week. This will encourage them to break down their own targets and work hard to get their tasks completed before the deadline.

Moreover, ways of improvements can also be discussed with the employees. One-on-one meetings of goal setting and improvements can work wonders for the overall progress of your private practice.

Identifying KPIs (Key Performance Indicators)

KPI is a measurable performance indicator that can help you in understanding the performance and progress of your private practice. KPIs work like a compass that determines whether you and your team are heading in the right direction as per your organizational goals and objectives (Figure 12.1). It showcases the existing performance of your employees, departments and overall business.

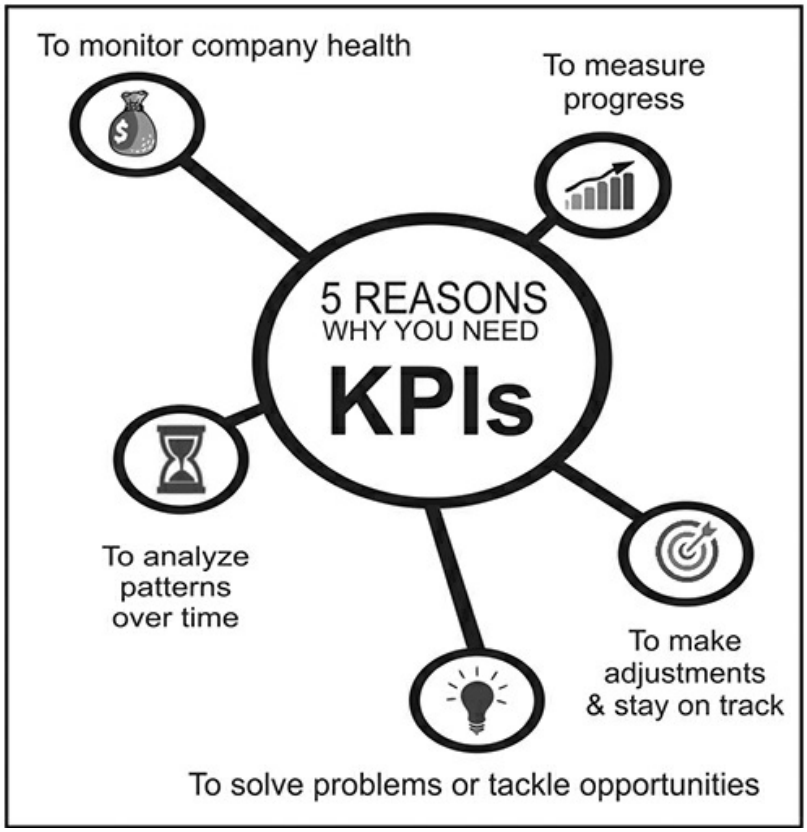


Figure 12.1. The 5 Reasons Why You Need Key Performance Indicators

In order to be truly effective, the KPIs must be:

- Quantifiable and well-defined
- Clearly communicated among your employees and teams
- Be appropriate and applicable to your business

The problem is that there are countless KPIs to select from and if you select the wrong one, it wouldn't get the right results since you would be trying to measure something not aligning with your specified goals. These KPIs are utilized by all businesses no matter how big or small they are. These performance indicators use data in determining the progress of your business. This means, the KPIs of your private practice might not be the same as other businesses since each and every organization has its own set of goals and objectives. However, the basic idea remains the same, which is to measure the progress and features of your organization using KPIs.

These KPIs can help you in making informed, strategic and effective decisions. But first, you need to select the right KPI for your private practice. It is highly recommended that you properly research and understand several

KPIs and identify the ones that are more related and specific to your goals before finalizing them.

Points to Consider

When you are selecting the KPI for your private practice, you must carefully identify the key areas of your practice that are measurable. You can utilize different metric sets for your business. By focusing on the appropriate and related ones, you would be able to get indications of your achievements or would get timely alerts about any problem or hurdle coming your way.

Following are the points you should take into consideration when selecting the KPIs for your private practice:

- Which medical field your practice represents
- The location and size of your business
- Which stage of the business cycle you are in and which stage you want to aim for
- Your long-term and short-term goals
- Any specific or unique factor or circumstance related to your business

Factoring in all these considerations will help you in narrowing down your choice of KPIs to select from.

Selecting the KPIs Related Directly to the Goals

These performance indicators are quantifiable data points or measurements that are utilized to assess the performance of your private practice related to the specified goals. For example, your KPI might be linked to your business goal of enhanced sales, enhanced ROI (Return on Investment) or enhanced patient satisfaction.

Since KPIs are metrics, you need to ensure that they are effective in order to accurately measure the performance of your business. Ensure that the KPIs you select are:

- Relevant and related to the business goals so that it can have maximum impact
- Balanced so you can measure both the long-term and short-term goals
- Understandable so that the entire staff of your private practice is aware of it
- Shared so that the entire team of your practice understands its importance

You might consider setting financial KPIs to have better control of the finances of your practice and ensure that you are heading towards prosperity and growth. These can be attained through the accounting system you have selected for your business so that they can be relevant. The non-financial KPIs can be stemmed from other factors like the CRM system or marketing efforts or more.

Focusing on Selected Metrics

One of the major mistakes companies make is selecting a bunch of KPIs. It is important to understand that a few key KPIs are all it takes to effectively measure the performance of your business. Instead of selecting numerous metrics to measure, identify selected metrics that are crucial for your private practice. If you try tracking and assessing various KPIs, this will gradually get you off track and lose focus on the bigger picture.

Each and every business model, industry and company are different, which means you can exactly determine the right number of KPIs you might need. The amount and type of KPIs being utilized by your competitors might not be the ones that would work for you. It is integral that you have a deeper look at your business and its goals and select a minimum of four KPIs. Ensure that the number stays within ten KPIs; the lesser, the better.

Considering the Stage of Your Practice

The stage of your business is another vital consideration when it comes to selecting your KPIs. Whether you have recently started your private practice, are in the process of growing or are already established, different metrics might be more integral for you. This is also why you can revise the KPIs once you have reached your goals since you will be expanding the goals or setting new ones.

While most businesses consider the typical KPIs that are selected by the industry, for instance, revenue generation, it is essential that you also select KPIs that are relevant to the objectives and goals of your company.

Take-Home Message

➢ The key to establishing the right goals and the key to achieve them is to break them down into smaller goals, making them less complex and intimidating.

➢ Breaking down your goals drastically increases the chance of successfully achieving those goals.

➢ Set a realistic and attainable goal; otherwise, the entire goal setting strategy may actually backfire.

➢ Determine who is responsible to do what. Each employee and staff member must be aware of their targets and the expectations you have from them.

➢ When each member knows and understands the roles they have to play, along with the time duration, they would be motivated to achieve their targets within the time frame.

➢ Hold meetings, reviews and evaluations in order to assess the milestones and progress of employees and to assess the progress of their goals.

➢ Enhance the level of collaboration and communication to help you better assess the progress of the goals and ensure that you can achieve the quarterly goals you set at the start of the year.

➢ Make necessary adjustments to all the goals or change your strategies to help meet those goals.

➢ Keep your employees informed about any changes to be made in the future. It is essential to keep them informed about the reasons behind them and how their roles might change.

➢ Online tools must be utilized to make the entire process manageable and easier. It adds efficiency to all the strategies.

➢ Setting SMART goals are a perfect way of ensuring that you are establishing the right weekly and daily goals for your private practice and for the entire team.

➢ The motivation levels of the employees will further increase when they are also involved in setting their goals every week.

➢ KPIs work like a compass that determines whether you and your team are heading in the right direction as per your organizational goals and objectives.

➢ These KPIs can help you in making informed, strategic and effective decisions.

➢ Properly research and understand several KPIs and identify the ones that are more related and specific to your goals before finalizing them.

Chapter 13
Creating Risk Management and Disaster Recovery Plan for the Medical Practice

"We cannot stop natural disasters but we can arm ourselves with knowledge: so many lives wouldn't have to be lost if there was enough disaster preparedness."

- Petra Nemcova

It is essential to realize the importance of risk management and disaster recovery planning if you want to protect your private practice. No matter how much you plan and how effective your strategies are for your medical practice, problems are bound to happen. There would be problems that can easily be managed, but then there might be some issues that might prove to be beyond your control, for instance, a natural disaster or a data breach. For such scenarios, a risk management and disaster recovery plan can help you in getting better control of the situation and reduce the negative consequences of the problem. With an effective plan in place, you would be able to get your private practice back on track in the shortest amount of time.

Risk Management and Disaster Recovery

You might think that storing all your patients' data in a fireproof safe situated in the basement of the private clinic might be enough for protection. However, what if the place gets flooded? Thinking of digitalizing all the data to enhance your protection? Although it is best to maintain a digitalized patient record, there could be a data breach or a virus that can wipe away the entire data.

These are the situations for which you need a plan to prevent such problems and to minimize their negative impact. In order to make a strong risk management and disaster recovery plan, you need to come up with the likely disaster scenarios that might occur and then come up with strategies to handle them. The best thing to do is to form a team and brainstorm for situations and ideas to ensure you create a strong plan.

Understandably, it is going to be rather difficult to think of ways that can

destroy or damage your private practice that you are establishing or have established with persistent hard work. But this is a very crucial task you have to do in order to protect your business.

In order to think of likely scenarios, focus on things that can happen which can affect and halt the operations of your private practice or certain areas of your private practice for a short duration and/or for a long duration. For instance:

1. Isolated space in your private practice:

- Long duration – water pipe bursts or fire destroys servers or phone systems
- Short duration – flu season affects one department

2. The whole building:

- Long duration – hacker or virus attacks, terrorist attack, fire engulfs the building
- Short duration – small virus attack, sewage pipe or water pipe breaks, causing an evacuation

3. Specific geographical area (building block):

- Long duration – civil unrest, protest, tornado, flood
- Short duration – police action, power loss

4. Bigger geographical area (city or country):

- Long duration – wildfire, earthquake, hurricane
- Short duration – storm, power outage

There can be several other likely scenarios that you must plan for.

Data Backup Planning

Whatever risk management and disaster recovery plan you come up with, should take into consideration the priorities, property and people. This means - those staff members crucial for bringing operations back online, with the right resources and equipment to perform their tasks and in ways that speed up the recovery process.

Additionally, there must be some data backups that can be accessed timely so that the data can be restored in the recovery servers. The best-recommended thing is storing data backups in numerous offsite places.

However, this might turn out to be a security and logistic nightmare if there is a massive amount of data to be stored. Therefore, the most effective and affordable solution is backing up your data online.

There are numerous software and solutions that you can utilize to organize all the data and to set up safety and security measures in order to protect it. It is best to consult a specialist to determine the best course of action you can take to maximize the protection and to efficiently plan for data backup.

Moreover, you also need to take into account the portable devices that might be carrying sensitive data. In case of theft, damage or being misplaced, it might seriously impact your private practice. It is important that you take the right measures to set backup options so that you can quickly recover the lost data.

Protecting Medical Records

Medical records are even more valuable as compared to credit cards in the black market. According to reports, the medical records that include ID numbers, Aadhaar Card Numbers, addresses and names can be sold in the black market. Therefore, cyber-criminals come up with ways to gather as many medical records as they possibly can to get their hands on a large sum of money.

This means that the entire industry of health care is in a rather sensitive situation after digitalizing all the patient records. While digitalizing records makes it more efficient for all health care providers to access them instantly and to provide the right treatment in lesser time, it has also opened up newer ways for criminals to get their hands on that valuable data. Therefore, it is your responsibility to make the online records as secure as they can get.

Consulting an IT professional is the best way to protect your patients' medical records. Moreover, the following are some useful ways to protect sensitive data:

Clearly Defining Strategy for Sensitive Data Management

You need to set clear strategies when it comes to sensitive data which can be done with strong data management. A majority of the health care institutions store patients' data and other important information in different systems: mobile phones, cold servers and/or data centers to avoid loss of data. However, when a patient's data is stored in multiple places, it gets a bit hard to protect it. The data could be safe in one place but unsafe in the other

place.

It is important that you create a strong data management strategy that consolidates the entire data in a single electronic system. This helps in simplifying the data protection and enhances efficiency.

Restricting Access to Patient Records

The best way to protect your patient records from a data breach is to restrict access to it. Limit the number of people who are authorized to access the data and that too with permission. This helps in reducing the chances of a data breach.

Updating and Sharing the Crisis Response Strategy

It is essential to regularly update the crisis response and disaster recovery plan. Moreover, it is also important that all the changes in procedures and policies are effectively communicated to the entire staff of your private practice so that they know what to do in case of an emergency or a crisis. This can not only protect your employees but also your patients.

Implementing Various Security Tools

It is important to implement several layers of security in order to protect the patients' records and support the policies and procedures you have implemented to safeguard the patients' data. Following are some of the tools you can utilize:

- Monitoring network traffic
- Setting up firewalls to protect your corporate network from being attacked by hackers
- Enabling data encryption for preventing access to data at rest and in motion
- Securing messaging so videos, images and text messages can be shared securely to smartphones and other devices
- Implementing DLP (Data Loss Prevention) solutions to manage and identify threats and secure data and ensure it doesn't get shared through the wrong or unsecured addresses and paths or through an unencrypted manner.

There can be several more security tools that can be implemented in your system to make your patients' data more secure.

Tips for a Disaster Recovery Plan

A well-planned disaster recovery and risk management plan can be created by considering numerous potential scenarios that can result in causing harm to your private practice and sensitive data. The more scenarios you consider, the more protected your private practice would be, but this might also cost more money to implement. But, this plan is integral for the safety and security of your private practice. Think of it as an insurance plan; people are reluctant to get one but are glad they got one when disaster strikes. You must ensure that the plan also includes the proximate time it would take to bring restart the operations of your private practice. Here are some useful tips to consider when creating the disaster recovery plan:

Create a Separate Budget for Possible Scenarios

As mentioned earlier, planning and implementing each possible scenario would cost money which means it is important to include risk management and a disaster recovery plan in your budget or better yet, create a separate budget especially for this. It is important that you consider all the scenarios that might happen to your private clinic and are relevant to your industry, your region and your area. For instance, your city might be prone to earthquakes while another city might be more likely to be affected by hurricanes.

This means you have to be specific to your area when it comes to natural disasters and also consider potential threats to your industry. It is also wise to include a plan of purchasing resources that would be required to communicate with the entire staff after and even during the time of disaster. This might include walkie-talkies, cell phones or some directions to listen to a specific local radio to know about further instructions.

Put Your Plan to the Test

When you have created your plan, it is recommended that you put it to the test. There is no point in creating risk management and a disaster recovery plan if it fails at the time of crises. Therefore, to ensure its effectiveness, you must put it on a test run. This doesn’t necessarily mean a full execution, but you can test the different aspects of the plan individually on an annual basis. This will help you in determining which area needs to be modified or improved. Gradually, test out all the sections of your plan to make sure that it is effective and would prove useful at the time of disaster. It is best to test the plan every year.

Evaluate the Plan

Since you need to make sure that the plan is useful and can help you get your private practice running as soon as possible after a disaster hits, you must properly evaluate and monitor the plan for its completeness. Since you have created the plan or have been a major part of its planning, the best way to review it is by asking your business partner (who wasn't a part of the planning), a colleague, a friend or a professional to review it for you. It is important to ensure that the recovery plan covers all aspects of your business including network, facilities, employees, data, communication channels and notification strategies.

Consider the Human Factor

Lastly, you must consider the people in your private practice. All the employees and staff working for you have family, friends and responsibilities to take care of just like you do. Of course, this depends on the type of disaster you are facing or have faced. If it is a natural disaster, you need to consider the fact that your employees would have family priorities including damaged homes or injured family members. Consider providing a temporary safe place for the employees who have been affected the most or offer medical insurance for all the employees so that can be covered in case of injuries during a disaster. Think of more ways you can offer support to your employees in case of such disaster, for instance, counseling services to all employees in case of a terrorist situation.

Take-Home Message

➢ It is essential to realize the importance of risk management and disaster recovery planning if you want to protect your private practice.

➢ With an effective plan in place, you would be able to get your private practice back on track in the shortest amount of time.

➢ There are numerous situations for which you need a plan to prevent such problems and to minimize their negative impact.

➢ There must be some data backups that can be accessed timely so that the data can be restored in the recovery servers.

➢ There are numerous software and solutions that you can utilize to organize all the data and to set up safety and security measures in order to protect it.

➢ Medical records are even more valuable as compared to credit cards in

the black market, which means they are more likely to be attacked by cyber-criminals.

➢ Consulting an IT professional is the best way to protect your patients' medical records.

➢ An effective way to protect your patient records from a data breach is to restrict access to it.

➢ It is also important to implement several layers of security in order to protect the patients' records.

➢ The more scenarios you consider, the more protected your private practice would be.

➢ When you have created your plan, it is recommended that you put it to the test to ensure its effectiveness.

Chapter 14
Medical and Organizational Ethics

"Being a doctor is not simply about having an understanding of anatomy and sickness, rather it is about having an understanding of true wellness and more importantly, it is about understanding the intensity of the concern of the patient's next of kin."

- Abhijit Naskar

In any organization, no matter which industry it belongs to, employees are hired who are possibly from different interests and backgrounds. They all come together on one platform to work towards specified objectives and goals that are beneficial for the company. All these employees are a major asset to the company, but since they come from different backgrounds, experiences, traditions and values, it is essential for the organization to maintain a proper ambience and decorum of the place so that everything goes on smoothly. This is where organizational ethics comes in, where all employees must follow the predefined set of rules and procedures in the workplace.

However, when it comes to the medical industry, there are a separate set of rules and regulations that must be followed by all the medical care providers aside from the organizational ones. These are known as medical ethics. These ethics are a set of guidelines prescribed by the medical institution or the government that the medical practitioners must comply with.

Importance of Ethics in a Medical Practice

Let's have a look at organizational ethics first. These ethics are a set of procedures, policies, rules or a culture that all employees must follow within the workplace. Ethical guidelines might differ from company to company but the typical topics that are covered among all organizations include corporate social responsibility, discrimination, equal employment, social media usage and more. There are various reasons why organizational ethics are crucial for all organizations including medical practice, which are as follows:

Creating a Positive Environment

Creating procedures, policies and rules would encourage a positive environment within your private practice. It would motivate the employees to perform ethical actions and take the right decisions that are for the betterment of patients and the workplace. With a set of ethical guidelines in place, all employees would feel protected and secure while working at your practice and they wouldn't have to worry about their personal beliefs or traditions being attacked. The ethical policies include equal growth opportunities, open-door policies and anti-discrimination rules. This increases the morale of the entire team and they feel positive and safe in their organization. As a result, the productivity and loyalty of the employees towards your private practice will increase.

Maintaining the Confidence of the Patients

You need to understand that it takes just a few seconds for the patients to lose trust and confidence in your health care institute, simply due to reading negative reviews online.

Therefore, you need to ensure a high level of patient satisfaction by following ethical practices and showing genuine compassion towards your patients and encouraging the entire team to do so as well.

The patients always remember the way they and their families were treated during their treatment at the hospital. The more compassionate and kind you are towards them, the more confidence they would have in you and your private practice.

This means that you need to ensure that each and every individual working at your private practice, from senior health care providers to the support staff including the cleaners, are kind and helpful towards the patients and their families.

All the employees must follow the organizational rules and ethics that have been specified by you to maintain high standards of care.

Decreasing the Likelihood of Liabilities

Those organizations that fail to create policies and rules on ethical standards and fail to determine a culture for their workplace have increased chances of facing financial liabilities. When the employees of your practice don't have any policies or rules to follow, they wouldn't know the best ways of tackling the patients.

When this happens, the patients will leave your private practice unsatisfied and unhappy. As a result, the reputation of your private clinic will suffer. Your existing patients and potential patients would opt for some other medical facility instead of yours and this will decline the revenue generation for your private practice. It would be difficult to grow and expand while having a negative reputation in the market.

Aside from the decline in revenue, your private practice will also be more likely to face lawsuits. With no proper organizational ethics, racial and sexual discrimination or misconduct might happen. This can easily motivate your employee to sue your practice. Moreover, discrimination against patients by certain employees might also occur without a clear set of ethical guidelines.

When you have created and communicated a clear set of organizational ethics and policies that describe the culture of the workplace, the employees will be inclined to follow them. This would also assist your practice to address and tackle any form of discrimination and harassment that happens at the workplace. The chances of potential lawsuits and complaints as well as negative feedback from unhappy patients would also dramatically decrease.

Elements of Organizational Ethics

There are various elements of organizational ethics. The major ones that are required to create a stable and strong workplace environment are as follows:

Respect

As a business owner who is passionate about providing outstanding health care services to your patients, you must know the importance of respect.

It is crucial that you begin respecting yourself and surround yourself with individuals who you can respect and who respect you as well as the patients. While respect does indicate that people would effectively do their tasks the right way, this doesn’t mean you simply leave them to it.

All the employees still require monitoring, evaluation, training and coaching. However, respect fosters trust which makes it easier for the owner or the manager to avoid micro-managing their employees.

It is best to avoid doing business with individuals, vendors, suppliers or hiring employees who you don’t respect or who don’t give you respect. There are numerous individuals, no matter how great their qualification is, who don’t respect themselves, their patients and their colleagues. It is best to avoid such people and if you see such qualities in existing employees,

immediate action must be taken before any damage is done.

Honor

In the field of medicine, health care providers have to take immediate decisions that have a major impact on the health of their patients. The health care providers must be able to live up to this huge responsibility. They must understand the ethical ways of helping their patients and colleagues. People, for whom honor is important, are major ambassadors of doing the right thing. You would want to surround yourself with people with exemplary behavior and those who go out of their way to offer support and encouragement to others.

Integrity

Integrity is another essential element that completes organizational ethics. Employees with integrity don't cheat, steal, lie or indulge in any wrongdoings. They are true to their words and stand by them. This is how the owner of a private practice should be. It is important to set examples for the rest of the staff. Ensure that you fulfill the promises you make to your employees. Admit your fault when you are wrong and don't be afraid to apologize. It is essential to be humble and compassionate in this field.

Avoid hiring or retaining individuals who lack integrity. Such individuals instill an environment of mistrust which spreads like a virus and as a result, can damage the strong bond amongst your employees. Make sure you get rid of individuals who opt to sell off the integrity and values of your private practice just to make some quick bucks.

Customer Focus

Your private medical practice would be nothing if you don't have patients. If you are not providing your patients with what you claim to offer, then soon enough you won't have any patients left. Moreover, if you and your employees don't focus on your patients, don't provide them with excellent care and don't ensure their health and wellness, then there is no point in having a private medical practice. Therefore, whatever decisions you make for your practice, whatever changes you make, it is important to consider the impact it would have on your patients. The whole reason for establishing a private practice is to provide good health care to your patients and to enhance their health and wellness. That is why make sure that you prioritize your patients.

Result-Oriented

You wouldn't be a business owner if you aren't result-oriented. But it is important to understand that ethics also plays a role in the outcome. Avoid aiming for results no matter what the cost is. You need to aim for results based on the values of your private practice. The results must be achieved by performing the tasks that are within the ethical values and guidelines you have prescribed. The means of achieving those results must be fair and also beneficial for the involved parties.

Good owners and leaders can identify the expected results clearly, offer a clear direction to their employees and support them to go after the goals and attain positive results. Ensure that you provide your employees with regular feedback so that they can enhance their performances and productivity, offer them training and coaching to keep them updated about the latest advancements and techniques in your field of medicine. This will ensure the prosperity and growth of your private practice.

Taking Risks

If you want your private practice to thrive and prosper, you would have to take certain risks. While continuing on the safe path can keep you stable and might earn you a decent income, it would not help your private practice grow, expand and become profitable. Therefore, you must think outside the box. Come up with innovative solutions and services. As long as you stay sincere and true to your vision and objectives and ensure there aren't any wrongdoings or inappropriate activities, you will also stay true to your organizational ethics.

Innovative businesses also attract individuals who are risk-takers and innovative thinkers. When your private practice hires such people, you are bound to see improvements. It is important to reward, support and encourage these creative thinkers when they take successfully calculated risks. Even when the risk isn't successful, it should be analyzed to identify what and where the plan went wrong and treat it as an opportunity for learning and improving.

Passion

Successful businesses include employees who are passionate about their work. There are people who work for the challenge and thrill their job brings, instead of simply working to get their paycheck. These people are driven,

excited and believe that their efforts and hard work do make a major difference. Without passion, people are only inclined to invest minimum effort in order to get paid.

Therefore, hire such people for your private practice who are passionate about providing excellent health care to the patients. You would want such driven people to be in your practice since they are also the ones who motivate and encourage others to do better. They are ideal role models for the entire workforce. These are the people who are not reluctant to add in extra effort or put in extra hours on an important project and ensure that it is completed in time with the best quality results.

Persistence

Being the owner of the private practice, it is essential that you exhibit the will to persist. Having the ability to continue working hard even when the results seem bleak is what an organization needs from its workforce in order to succeed. Giving up easily or too early is not how businesses become successful. You need to set an example for your employees by being persistent so that they follow suit. This persistence stems from being passionate about your job. Everyone at your private practice must have the belief that the medical practice, the people and the resources have what it takes to make it big. This is the attitude that motivates people to work hard, think creatively and take calculated risks.

These are the elements of organizational ethics that create a strong and effective culture of an organization. Being the owner and the leader, you need to set an example by exhibiting these ethics. Moreover, it is also your responsibility to invest effort and time in recruiting the right individuals to work with you. They must share all these ethical values so that your private practice can prosper and run smoothly. No matter what happens, you must stick to these organizational ethics and must ensure that all the employees follow these ethics as well.

Principles of Medical Ethics

Medical ethics are the moral guidelines that help in governing medical practice. Health care providers have an increased moral obligation and duty towards their patients as whatever decision they take can have a major impact on their health and life in general. Therefore, there are specific medical ethics that all health care professionals are required to follow. It is important that you have a set of guidelines for your employees to follow in case of complex

situations where quick decisions are required or during normal procedures.

Following are some guidelines and ethics of conduct that all health care providers must follow:

Autonomy

It is important for all health care providers to understand that everyone has the right to their own body and have more control over what happens to it. This indicates that competent or informed adults have the right to accept or refuse surgeries, drugs and treatments as per their wishes. If a patient refuses treatment or part of a treatment, you are not supposed to force them to change their mind or force that treatment on them. Whatever the patient decides must be respected by all, even if you and the entire staff feel that it is not the best decision for the patient. The most you can do is inform the patient about all the benefits that treatment can offer and how it can enhance their health. Give them as much information regarding the treatment, but in the end, the decision is still theirs to take.

Beneficence

Health care providers should always aim to enhance the health of their patients. Their goal should be to do as much as they possibly can to help the patient get better. However, you must also understand that what might be a good treatment or strategy for one patient might not be beneficial for the other one. Therefore, all patients must be treated as individual cases.

Non-maleficence

This means, no matter what the situation is, the health care providers are responsible to cause the least possible harm or no harm at all to their patients. This helps the care providers to make decisions in difficult situations in which they must determine if the action can cause a double effect and unintentionally cause harm to the patients.

Justice

Lastly, you must ensure that you and your entire team are as fair as you possibly can when treating your patients and when assigning scarce resources. The patients that need it the most must be given priority to the scarce resources. Moreover, you must be able to provide proper justification for your decision if need be.

These are some of the main medical ethics that all health care providers must follow and implement. It is important to determine if there is any state

or country specified medical ethics that all medical institutions are supposed to follow. You can create more guidelines for your employees as well to make it safer and easier for them to make the right decisions.

Take-Home Message

➢ Employees are a major asset to the company but since they come from different backgrounds, experiences, traditions and values, it is essential for the organization to maintain a proper ambience and decorum of the place so that everything goes on smoothly.

➢ When it comes to the medical industry, there are a separate set of rules and regulations that must be followed by all medical care providers aside from organizational ethics. These are known as medical ethics.

➢ These ethics are a set of procedures, policies, rules or a culture that all employees must follow within the workplace.

➢ With a set of ethical guidelines in place, all employees feel protected and secure while working at their workplace and they wouldn’t have to worry about their personal beliefs or traditions being attacked.

➢ A high level of patient satisfaction can be ensured by following ethical practices and by showing genuine compassion towards the patients and encouraging the entire team to do so as well.

➢ Those organizations that fail to create policies and rules on ethical standards and fail to determine a culture for their workplace have increased chances of facing financial liabilities.

➢ The chances of potential lawsuits and complaints as well as negative feedback from unhappy patients, would also dramatically decrease when proper organizational ethics are developed and communicated.

➢ Medical ethics are the moral guidelines that help in governing the medical practice.

➢ It is important that there are a set of guidelines for all employees to follow in case of complex situations where quick decisions are required or during normal procedures.

Chapter 15
How to Hire and Select the Best Team for Your Medical Practice?

"Teamwork is the ability to work together towards a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments towards organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results."

- Andrew Carnegie

Now that you have started your private practice, you need to create a strong and efficient team to work by your side. It is impossible to manage the entire practice on your own; you need dedicated and passionate employees and staff working for you. Recruitment is not an easy task; it requires you to invest your time and effort but when done right, you end up with a brilliant team motivated to bring success to your practice.

Here are the steps you need to take throughout the recruitment process:

Step One: Identification of Vacancies and Needs

The first step is to determine where you want help. Which positions do you have in your private practice that must be filled and what needs you must get fulfilled around the practice that you won't have time to oversee yourself. Before you determine the kind of employees or the type of skills you are looking for in the employees, you would have to determine the available vacancies.

These can be of two types:

Newly Created

If you have just established your private practice, then you would be creating these positions to be filled. When creating a new position, it is essential that you:

- Consider and fully understand the goals and objectives of each department.

- Determine how many positions in a department are required.
- Evaluate the core skills that would be required to fulfill this position.

Replacement

If you have already hired employees and someone leaves, you have to hire a replacement. Here are a few things to consider:

- Do a job analysis to determine exactly what is required from the job.
- Review position and determine whether there need to be changes in the responsibilities and tasks that were not performed by the previous employee or shouldn't be done by the new hire.

If there are changes needed in the position, evaluate:

- Required levels to perform the tasks.
- All the responsibilities that were being performed by the previous employee.
- Tasks or responsibilities that you want to include or remove from the position.
- Major responsibility or supervisory.
- What would be the budget?
- What would be the working hours?

Step Two: Creating a Job Description

A good job description is very helpful to make the entire process of recruitment a successful one. On the basis of this description, evaluation tasks, interviews and reference questions are developed. In order to create a strong job description, ensure that it should include the following:

- Offers a short description or provides an image of your private practice.
- Demonstrates the qualifications required, the responsibilities to be performed in order to attract the right candidate.
- Offers an opportunity to clearly understand the job's value proposition.
- Acts as documentation to assist in preventing and defending against any discrimination complaints by offering evidence that the decision was taken on business needs.
- Enhances retention since the percentage of turnover is high among new hires. The satisfaction level of employees decreases when they are forced

to perform tasks that they were not supposed to perform.

- Enhances the search engine optimization by making sure that the posting ranks higher in the search conducted by the candidate online.
- Highlights accountability, workflow and tasks which allows the department to plan out ways it can grow.
- Helps in creating performance objectives.
- Utilized for career training and planning through offering apparent distinctions between required competencies and responsibility levels.
- Works as a benchmark to help in ensuring external and internal equity.

However, before creating the job description, it is important that you identify the key responsibilities and duties. This should include the following:

- Preferred Qualifications
- Minimum Requirements
- Essential Functions
- Position Purpose
- General Information

A good job description defines the responsibilities and duties clearly to attract the right individuals to apply for the job. Including all the details, preferred qualifications, minimum qualifications, experience required and others, help in narrowing down the choices. The more specific the job description is, the more relevant applications you will receive which would make the selection process easier and less time-consuming. Moreover, it should also include any specialized skills that might be required for the job as well as the hours and days the employee is expected to work. The accurate details of the job description will help the candidates in fully understanding the position as well as your expectations from them if they are hired for the job.

Step Three: Developing a Plan for Recruitment

All the positions need a proper recruitment plan which is structured carefully, mapping out the strategies for hiring and attracting the best possible applicant for the role. It helps in ensuring that the applicants also include women, underrepresented individuals like people with disabilities, veterans, etc.

Aside from the placement goals of the job position, this plan must also include the mediums through which this position will be promoted and advertised. This plan is usually developed by the human resource manager in coordination with the head. However, if you are just starting out with the hiring process in your newly established private practice, you can do this yourself or get professional help.

The main elements of this recruitment plan include:

- Period of posting
- Goals of placement
- Posting through diversity agencies
- Searching resume banks

Other than this, the recruitment plan must also include the advertising resources and the additional resources where the job would be advertised. A number of both external and internal recruitment sources must be used to ensure that the job posting reaches the best candidates, those who reflect the organizational values and ethics of your private practice. The more advertising resources used, the better reach the job posting will get.

Following are some of the sources that you can utilize:

- Campus Recruiting
- Professional Conference Recruiting
- Job Fairs
- Social Media
- Print Advertisement
- Internet Job Boards

It is essential to encourage women, minorities and other such groups to apply in order to offer equal employment opportunities to all.

Step Four: Implementing the Plan and Posting the Jobs

When you are done with the job description and are sure that it is perfectly written, it is time to implement your recruitment plan and post the vacancies. You need to make an extra effort in making sure that the job description is accurate and the text is posted properly without any mistakes and errors, to avoid confusion. This is important because, once the job is posted, it would not be possible to make modifications to the elements since it would affect

the applicant pool.

Before posting the position, you should:

- Ensure that all the details of the description are correct and accurate.
- In case of multiple positions, ensure that nothing has been mixed up.
- Get the descriptions checked and proofread by two or three individuals to make sure there aren't any mistakes.
- Post the position in multiple channels at once.
- Check if the position has been properly uploaded.
- Share the positions on your private practice's social media pages as well to gain more responses.

You can continue reviewing each applicant as they apply or you can wait till the posting days are completed. If you already have an HR team, then it would be easier to manage, but if you are hiring your first employees for your practice, it is best to review the applications as they come in order to avoid getting overwhelmed.

Step Five: Reviewing all Applicants and Shortlisting Them

Once you have posted the position, you will start receiving applications. It is best to thoroughly evaluate the resumes of all the applicants on the basis of their qualifications and experience. The ideal way to do it is to assign two or more individuals to go through the process of reviewing the applicants in order to reduce any possibility of biases. The members can also add in their comments on the applicants as need be.

Ensure that all the applicants have shared all the necessary information regarding their salary requirements, availability, shift preference and other details. Moreover, the members responsible for reviewing the applications, must also be fully aware of the position available along with your expectations of the right candidate. They must know the minimum requirements, minimum experience and other crucial details that a candidate must possess. This way they will ensure that only the right candidates are shortlisted.

Once the shortlisted candidates have been finalized from the pool of applications, you or another senior member can go through them once again to ensure that the candidates shortlisted fit the job requirements. After thoroughly reviewing all the shortlisted candidates, the list will be final.

Afterward, you would need to create an interview list for all the candidates. Contact the candidates for interviews and confirm their availability. The interview list should be modified and changed as per the availability for an interview with each candidate.

Step Six: Conducting Interviews

The interviews are a very important part of the selection process. An interview offers the employer as well as the candidate an opportunity to understand each other and authenticate the information and details provided by both parties.

Before the interviews, you must prepare some interviewing guidelines and have a few questions prepared beforehand. You need to make sure that the interview process is thoroughly conducted and for that, you must have all the relevant data needed to evaluate the abilities and skills of the candidates. It is best to take a few minutes before the interview to go through the details of the candidates so that you can ask the right questions.

Remember that all the questions you ask must be related to the position and must help you to determine the abilities and skills that are required to efficiently perform the job. You can also ask competency and/or behavioral-based interview questions as these can help you in assessing the ability of the candidate to perform all the responsibilities and duties required from the job while also assessing their ability to follow organizational ethics and values of your private practice.

You can conduct:

- Virtual interviews
- One-on-one interviews
- Panel interviews

It depends on the needs and requirements of your private practice as well as your ease.

Step Seven: Selecting the Right Applicant

Once you have conducted all the interviews, you must go through all the candidates. If it was a panel interview, then all the members can discuss the candidates and determine which one would be best for the job as per the selection criteria. It is important to keep in mind that you should be able to justify the decision in case needed, as to on what basis the particular

candidate was hired.

In case there are more than one ideal candidates and it is getting difficult to make the decision between them, you can always call them for a second interview. This gives you a chance to get to know them more and ask more specific questions regarding their qualifications and experience.

Other than that, you also need to conduct reference checks on the selected candidates to attain information regarding the performance and conduct of the candidate from their previous employers. Their conduct and performance are critical to determine, regardless of their abilities, knowledge and skills. If they have bad work ethics, are known to misbehave often, are not team players or consistently perform low, then it is best to go with some other candidate. Past performance, work ethics and conduct are crucial predictors of future success.

A hiring mistake can prove to be rather costly in terms of money, energy and time. This often happens when organizations fail to do a reference check as this can also lead to legal consequences which you wouldn’t want your newly established private practice to go through.

Step Eight: Finalizing the Recruitment

Once you have successfully completed the recruitment process and have selected the right candidate for the position, you have to make the offer to that candidate. Before calling up the candidate for the offer, it is best to have another review done of the selection process, in which you:

Go through all the responsibilities and duties of the positions, make sure they were described accurately and were rightly reflected in the interview process and job description.

Assess the selection criteria that were utilized and make sure it was purely based on merit and the requirements of the position.

Ensure all the questions asked in the interview were relevant to the selection criteria.

Make sure all the applicants were fairly treated throughout the screening and interview process.

Once you have double-checked the process, you can forward the offer to the candidate. This process typically takes the following steps:

- Offer is initiated

- Offer is negotiated
- Offer is countered
- Offer is finalized

You must make sure that the entire recruitment process is closed properly. All the candidates interviewed and not selected must be notified. All the candidates as well as the documentation, should be updated on the database of your private practice for future use.

Take-Home Message

Recruitment is not an easy task, it requires you to invest your time and effort, but when done right, you end up with a brilliant team motivated to bring success to your practice.

➢ Before you determine the kind of employees or the type of skills you are looking for in the employees, you would have to determine the available vacancies.

➢ A good job description is the thing that can make the entire process of recruitment a successful one.

➢ Before creating the job description, it is important that you identify key responsibilities and duties.

➢ The more specific the job description is, the more relevant applications you will receive which would make the selection process easier and less time-consuming.

➢ A number of both external and internal recruitment sources must be used to ensure that the job posting reaches the best candidates, those who reflect the organizational values and ethics of your private practice.

➢ You need to make an extra effort in making sure that the job description is accurate and the text is posted properly without any mistakes and errors, to avoid confusion.

➢ It is best to thoroughly evaluate the resumes of all the applicants on the basis of their qualifications and experience.

➢ An interview offers the employer as well as the candidate to understand one another more and authenticate the information and details provided by both parties.

➢ You also need to conduct reference checks on the selected candidates to

attain information regarding the performance and conduct of the candidate from their previous employers.

➢ Before calling up the candidate for the offer, it is best to have another review done of the selection process.

Chapter 16
How to Create a Compensation Structure for the Medical Practice Team?

"Paying people a fair wage is a sign of respect and acknowledgement of the value of people's contributions to the business. When people are treated fairly and with respect, they will provide unparalleled levels of support and commitment inside the business, and to clients and customers. Everyone is more successful when people are paid a living wage."

- Amy B. Lyman

Deciding the Salaries and Compensation Package

For all your potential employees, salary and the compensation package would be one of the major concerns. Being the owner of a private medical practice, having a pay scale as a reference for the compensation package would ensure a smoother and more efficient recruitment process. Having the ability to explain properly the way compensation packages are determined for potential employees, makes you a desirable employer which ensures that your private practice attracts the best possible talent.

So, how do you determine the pay scale for potential employees?

Assessing the Position

First of all, you must assess the position for which you are setting the pay scale and how valuable it is for your private practice. The best way to do this is by going through the detailed job description you had created earlier. Go through the tasks and responsibilities, the title of the job, the working hours and commitment required for the job as well as other details.

Once you have determined the demands of the position, you can evaluate how valuable the position is. How must energy and time would you take in order to perform all the tasks yourself? How much would you expect to get paid for it? What other certifications, experience or skills would one need to perform this job in the best possible manner? Such questions will help you

determine the value of this position and select the pay scale.

Researching Wages

The major factor to determine a pay scale is to offer competitive pay. You can research the median salary for the specific position and forecast what the potential employee would expect. Researching the salary package would also enable you to determine whether your private practice would be able to sustain the pay for the potential employee you want to hire. By determining what your competitors are paying, you would be able to get a better idea about what salary scale to set.

Deciding a Maximum and a Minimum

When you have determined the position's value as well as the median salary for the position, you would be able to create a range of the salary scale. In order to create a sustainable employee and position, you need to be careful when establishing the feasible salary scale which your private practice would be able to afford and keep the employee happy.

Determine what minimum amount would be ideal for this position and what is the maximum you would be willing to pay for it? Make sure you also consider the potential employee as well. What if your competitor hires them, would it place you at a disadvantage? If yes, then they definitely deserve the maximum pay. If it would be easy to find another suitable candidate for this position, then opt towards the minimum pay or vary in between.

Determining the Pay Method

Whilst the methods of payment address monthly vs. biweekly and hourly vs. salary, it also helps you to come up with other means of compensation for the team. There are numerous ways that you can compensate your hires aside from the usual pay. These compensations might also motivate them to overlook a slightly lower pay than they were expecting. There are many perks that can be offered including commission, stock options, bonuses, discounted gym membership, health insurance and more.

Being Open to Negotiation

While negotiating the pay might be uncomfortable for both parties, it is wise to expect that the potential employees will try negotiating the salary offered. Those employees who can state their worth respectfully, typically showcase desirable professional and negotiation qualities that would be beneficial for the position they are being offered. In order to sustain employees who strive

for the best and continuously give you exceptional performance, it is essential that they are compensated sufficiently for their efforts and worth. Being open and flexible to negotiations and opting to meet the employee halfway, can lead to appreciation and gratitude which would inspire the employees to be loyal and give their best.

Determining the Pay Increase Structure

The basic pay is the fixed payment which is made in exchange for the employees performing their specified responsibilities and duties assigned to their roles. When you offer an increase in the basic pay that is known as the pay increase. There are numerous methods and reasons to determine the increase. The most common factors are as follows:

Increase in Living Cost

This increase in pay is given to all employees, irrespective of their performances, for the intention of enhancing the base pay by a specific percentage to manage the increase in the living cost. When the cost of living increases, it is understandable that the pay scale must be increased as well.

When the living cost increase is offered, it is typically done annually and is provided to all the employees of the organization at the rate which has been recommended and approved by the Director of the Board of Directors of the company. It is essential that this increase is dependent on your private practice’s overall financial situation.

There are various smaller companies that stay away from the typical living cost increase and go instead with market adjustments.

Adjustment and Changes in the Market

Once the market survey data is collected, market adjustments can then be made in the salaries. This data is calculated and assessed at the end of the calendar or fiscal year. All organizations assess the salaries they offer against the market data. If needed, base salaries are adjusted for the roles that are being paid below the market pay scale. In case the role is being significantly overpaid in comparison to the market, many organizations tend to notify their employees and not offer any increase in their pay till their salaries meet the market line.

Promotions

This is the advancement of your employees to a better position at a higher level than their current position. The employees who get promoted are

offered an increase in pay, considering the market information, qualifications and performance. The promotions are mostly based on the opportunities available and the employees preparedness to advance to the next level.

Merit Increase

The merit increase in pay is typically offered in order to recognize the contribution made by the employee and compensate them for their outstanding performances. The performance of the employee is the major factor in being awarded the merit increase in pay. It is also one of the factors that can move the employee from the starting level to the midpoint or highest level in the pay scale. These increases can be offered to the employee at the start of a new year or a year after the performance review, as per the philosophy or structure of your compensation strategy.

Bonuses

Bonuses are the amount paid over and above the specified amount of salary or wage. This is distributed when the organization has attained enough profits to pay bonuses or as per the terms outlined in the employment contract.

Bonuses are typically utilized by numerous organizations to enhance the productivity, motivation and morale of their employees or as a form of appreciation when employees achieve significant goals. If the bonus is discretionary, it cannot be considered as a contract. However, if you promise your employees a bonus, then you would be legally liable to pay it.

This is also offered to the employees if they achieve their specified targets. Many organizations set targets for their employees to achieve every month or for every quarter. Once the employees surpass those targets, they are rewarded with bonuses.

Incentives

These plans are not usually popular in the non-profit industry. But there have been changes in the perceptions of these incentive plans. Offering these plans to the senior level employees can allow your private practice to compete for the talent which you might not otherwise be able to attract.

These plans are created to offer rewards to your employees for their enhanced performance and commitment as well as to increase their levels of motivation. It is created to supplement fringe benefits and base pay. In the case of a financial incentive plan, the employee would be offered a percentage of cash bonus or base salary. Whereas in the non-financial plan,

the employee would be offered benefits like enhanced professional development or more paid vacations.

Benefits to be Offered

Aside from the monetary compensation, there are numerous more benefits that organizations offer their employees to form a complete package. It is up to you to determine the types of benefits you would prefer to offer your employees aside from their salaries.

Following are some of the benefits typically offered by the organizations:

Retirement Plan

A majority of organizations around the world offer their employees a retirement fund in which the contribution is made by both the company and the employee. Many employees opt to select their own contribution percentage. Some opt for the highest contribution percentage in order to contribute as much as they can in their retirement fund from early on.

There are numerous choices that can be offered in the retirement fund. You can offer a retirement fund or offer pension plans in which the employees get a specific amount of monthly income after their retirement. You can also offer Exempted Funds or any other plans that you deem suitable. The aim is to help your employees prepare for their retirement as early as possible.

This is especially true for young employees since most of them don't even think about starting a retirement fund so early. However, if one doesn't start saving up for retirement, it gets rather difficult to save much after they turn 40 or 50. The sooner the retirement planning starts, the better off life would be after retirement. This is something, you as a business owner and that too, as a health care provider should encourage among your employees.

Health Insurance Plan

Health insurance is an important benefit to offer your employees. This also increases the value of the overall package you offer them and helps you attract top talent. While many small businesses find it difficult to offer a lot of benefits to their employees, offering health insurance is not that difficult. This is something that you don't have to do on your own. All you need to do is contact a health insurance provider and inquire about their packages. Almost all of the health insurance providers offer packages for companies. If you share your requirements and needs with them, they would be able to come up with the right health insurance plan that you can offer to all of your

employees. Just like health insurance, dental coverage is also an effective added benefit that can appeal to your employees. As per your policy, you can provide dental coverage for certain procedures and treatments. These plans can vary from company to company, but typically offers categories including coverage for major services, basic services and preventive services. This can also vary from oral surgeries to semi-annual cleanings. There are many dental plans that can cover all the basic procedures, while some also offer a certain amount for the major surgeries. Best of all, some of the health care providers also include dental coverage so you might not have to get dental coverage from another insurance provider.

Paid Off Days

This is something all organizations offer their employees. You need to realize that everyone needs time off from work to cater to personal issues, illness in the family, recovering from a sickness or recharging on a vacation. While some companies offer more generous off days than others, the average amount of paid off days that should be offered to
the employees is at least 14 days annually. Many companies include personal time and sick days in these 14 days while others count them separately. These paid off days are crucial for the physical and mental well-being of your employees. This enables them to relax or recover from an illness without worrying about salary deductions which provides them with peace of mind.

Wellness Benefits

There are numerous organizations that also offer their employees rebates or membership discounts for gym or exercise equipment. This encourages physical and mental wellness among the employees and encourages them to care for themselves. There are some organizations that also have an in-house gym or offer in-house yoga classes for the mental and physical well-being of their employees. If you have enough space and resources to create a small and well-equipped gym, consider investing in it. You can also collaborate with nearby gyms to offer discounted membership prices to your employees.

Free or Subsidize Food

Another added benefit that you can offer your employees is subsidized food. You can offer an allowance for food every month or create a cafeteria where food can be served at subsidized prices for all your employees. Moreover, the patients and visitors coming to your private clinic can also get food from this cafeteria at an affordable price. This can also add to your revenue generation

for private practice. If you can’t afford to create a cafeteria or offer a food allowance, you can offer free coffee and tea to the employees. Provide tea bags or instant coffee packets and the employees can make their own when they desire. Aside from this, you can collaborate with a coffee or tea company to sponsor a dispenser at your place which would make it even easier for employees to get their daily dose of caffeine.

Disability and/or Life Insurance

Life insurance offers compensation to the loved ones of your employees who have passed away. This is a great incentive for employees who support their family members. It ensures that their spouse, children and other dependents would be offered financial help in case of their untimely demise. Disability insurance can benefit employees who have any disability or acquire any disability later on. It helps in compensating them as a payout in case they are unable to continue working because of a disability. There are many insurance providers who actually offer a complete package which includes life insurance, health insurance and dental insurance.

More Employee Benefits

There are numerous more benefits that you can offer your employees as per your policy and requirements. Additional employee benefits can differ from company to company. These might include:

- Meal breaks
- Vacation leaves
- Severance pay
- Adoption, paternity and maternity leave
- Hazard pay
- Discount vouchers or coupons

Fringe Perks and Benefits

There are other fringe benefits and perks that also vary from company to company. These can include profit sharing, stock options, company car, tuition reimbursement or assistance, child care, child education, discounts on the services and products of the company, a company-sponsored house, housing loans and many others in addition to the salary of the employees. While all these perks and benefits are valuable, these benefits cannot be traded in or cashed in by the employees.

Offering added benefits to the employees makes up an attractive package which appeals to your potential and existing employees. Even though you have just created your private practice, it doesn't mean that you can't afford to offer a good salary with great benefits to your employees. There are numerous ways that you can offer added benefits to your employees without spending a lot of money. These benefits help in retaining the employees and also attracting outstanding talent. When your employees are motivated and content with what they are getting from the company, they would be more productive which would, in turn be beneficial for your private practice.

Take-Home Message

➢ For all your potential employees, salary and the compensation package would be one of the major concerns.

➢ Having the ability to explain properly the way compensation packages are determined for potential employees makes you a desirable employer which ensures that your private practice attracts the best possible talent.

➢ First of all, you must assess the position for which you are setting the pay scale and how valuable it is for your private practice.

➢ The major factor to determine a pay scale is to offer competitive pay.

➢ In order to create a sustainable employee and position, you need to be careful when establishing the feasible salary scale which your private practice would be able to afford.

➢ There are many perks that can be offered including commission, stock options, bonuses, discounted gym membership, health insurance and more.

➢ Being open and flexible to negotiations and opting to meet the employee halfway, can lead to appreciation and gratitude which would inspire the employees to be loyal and give their best.

➢ The employees who get promoted are offered an increase in pay, considering the market information, qualifications and performance.

➢ Bonuses are typically utilized by numerous organizations to enhance the productivity, motivation and morale of their employees or as a form of appreciation when employees achieve significant goals.

➢ Aside from the monetary compensation, there are numerous more benefits that organizations offer their employees to form a complete package.

➢ Offering added benefits to the employees makes up an attractive package

which appeals to your potential and existing employees.

Part III
Running a Successful Medical Practice

Chapter 17
Designing and/or Decorating your Clinic

"Good criticism is very rare and always precious."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

The interior of your private practice plays an important role in making your patients comfortable and at ease. A visit to the doctor is a nerve-racking and overwhelming experience for many patients. Therefore, it is up to you to make them feel relaxed right from the minute they enter your private clinic. There is plenty that you can do to make your patients feel comfortable and welcome just with the interior of your private clinic.

Main Questions to Ask Yourself

When it comes to decorating and designing your private practice, there are a few questions you must ask yourself to ensure that you end up with ideal interiors for your private practice:

The Visuals

The visual of your private practice can have a major influence on the overall perception of your patients regarding your practice. Ever been in a private clinic that looked shabby and had an uncomfortable seating arrangement and seemed overly crowded? The first impression of your place can do wonders. Ensure that you make your private practice visually appealing for your patients. Here are a few things to consider:

- Pick one inspirational piece for a room and then design or decorate the entire room around it. For instance, you pick a couch as an inspiration piece for the waiting room. You can base the entire design and décor of the room on the couch like contrasting the wall colors with the color of the couch and decorating the room with traditional items if the coach has a traditional style.
- Another important aspect of the visuals is the positioning or arrangement of your furniture. It must have a logical path and clear flow once the

patients walk into the room. If you place a couch, chair or another piece of furniture in front of the entryway, it might appear like a wall and that's clearly not inviting. Ensure that the doorway or entryway to the room is clear and open, so it would feel more inviting. Place the couches and chairs in a way that the patients don't have to navigate their way around it to sit. Try sitting at each chair to get the idea of what your patients would be seeing right in front of them while they wait. Ensure that each seat has a pleasant view and have adequate breathing space.

- Placing artwork in your clinics can light up the otherwise dull room. It is recommended that you put all the photos and artwork at eye level. Make sure that the artwork is not depressing but gives out a cheerful vibe. Your aim should be to help the patients relax and feel welcoming; it is best to place colorful, heartwarming artwork on the walls. You can also place informative posters or even humorous posters to lighten up the mood of your patients.
- It happens too often that, when one is planning the interior, the focus is mostly on the walls and the floors typically get neglected. It is best to have a flooring to give it a professional feel and also place some rugs to make the place cozy and warm. However, be careful about the size of the rug since the wrong size can make the room feels smaller. If you can't find the ideal rug, then you can wait a while till you find it instead of placing the wrong rug and messing up with the interior. The complete designing and decorating of your private clinic takes time, it is not a one day job. Ensure that you make the right choices since it can make or break the room.

The Sound

This might seem surprising but the interior of a private practice also includes sounds. You might want to block the sounds from the surgeries you may be conducting to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the patients. This can be done using white noise which is rather common in almost all medical clinics. Aside from the white noise, you can also opt for light and calming music in the background. However, you need to ensure that the music is not too loud that it becomes distracting. Different kinds of music can stir different moods amongst the people. It is best to select something neutral and calming to soothe the patients.

The Smell

If your private practice smells strange or bad, then it is not a place where your patients can relax. Additionally, while many individuals might love incense or scented candle, it might lead to irritation or allergic reactions among others. The incense smell might irritate the eyes and also lead to a headache among some individuals. It is best to avoid placing scented candles and incense in your office. If you really want to have a pleasing smell in your private practice, it is best to opt for essential oil diffusers as it would also help in keeping the air clean.

The Feel

Your patients might be sitting on the couches or chairs in the waiting room for even an hour in some cases. Therefore, you need to offer comfortable seating in the waiting area. Consider the fabric of the seats – is it comfortable to sit on for a long time? Do the chairs in your waiting area have armrests? This might be challenging and embarrassing for overweight individuals as they might find it difficult to fit into chairs with armrests. Make sure you mix it up a bit. You might also want to place some cushions and blankets for the patients usage as some might feel cold or some simply like to hold things close to them when they are nervous to feel a sense of security. Moreover, make sure that the temperature of your waiting room is normal; you won't want patients to feel too cold or too hot while they are waiting for their turn.

The Food

Offering some snacks, mints, water, tea and coffee can make the patients feel welcomed in your private practice. This decision can be based on the budget you have. Setting up water coolers with disposable cups is a great idea; make sure that you set up a recycling bin in the room so that the cups can be properly disposed of. Moreover, you can set up a coffee/tea station at one side of the room with instant coffee and tea sachets and sugar or with a coffee and tea machine.

These are some of the main things you should go through before you decide on the design and decoration of your private practice.

Essential Things to Consider

There are some important things you must consider before making final decisions on the interior of your private practice.

Waiting Room

Waiting rooms are one of the most important areas of your private practice.

This is where the patients will spend the most time while they wait for their turn. This is also the room that can create a lasting impression on all your patients. This is the reason why you need to make this place as comfortable and welcoming as you possibly can.

The best thing to do is to provide a number of comfortable seating options around the room. There can be a few rows of chairs on one end, a few small tables and chairs for professionals to work while they wait, a few couches reserved for elderly and disabled individuals and a child-friendly corner as well.

You can also place a bookshelf filled with books and magazines so that the patients can keep themselves occupied while they wait. Placing a TV set in the waiting room has had a number of opinions. Many believe that placing a television in a waiting room can be a good way for patients to pass their time while they wait for their turns. However, others believe that the constant noise of the television can become a source of irritation for many patients. Therefore, placing a TV is more of a personal preference.

If possible, you can also place a coffee and tea machine, make your own coffee and tea station at a corner. Moreover, a water dispenser with disposable cups must also be placed in the waiting room.

In order to make the room inviting and welcoming, you can also hang a few artwork or informative posters on the wall to make it appealing. A bulletin board can also be placed on one wall that can share the latest happenings and upcoming events around the neighborhood with the patients.

Enhanced Privacy

Receiving medical treatment can be a rather private and intimate thing for many patients. It is important to take care of your patients privacy when they visit your private clinic. In order to provide the best care treatment to your patients, it is important to set up your private practice in a way that the patients have complete privacy while they are being treated, for instance in the consultation room, examination room or surgery room.

Furthermore, placing a check-in desk out in the open makes it super easy for everyone in the waiting room to listen to the reason for other patient’s visit as well as their private information. Hence, it is better to have a check-in desk in a private place so that the patients can share their information without the fear of anyone hearing their private details.

Another good idea is to have a traditional counter or desk in the waiting room which is dedicated to guide, assist the patients and verify their arrival for appointments,while a separate area is set up for the check-in and check-out process.

Exam Rooms

Another factor that makes medical care distinctive is that it doesn't have a one size fit all approach. Even the patients who are experiencing similar symptoms can require different treatment plans as per their preferences, medical history and other health factors. Therefore, you must design the examination room in such a way that it can accommodate a wide variety of treatment options.

Ensure that the seats and the examination beds are clean and comfortable for the ease of the patients. The rooms should also have dim lights to enhance a relaxing atmosphere.

Comfort Level

Indeed, a doctor's visit can be intimidating for many patients. It can be a stressful event for them to come to your private clinic and wait for their turn. It is important for you to help them lower their stress levels by providing a comfortable and soothing environment. On average, patients have to wait for about 20 minutes for their turn. Make sure that the receptionist or the employee at the help desk patiently handles the queries and concerns of the patients. Make sure that the entire check-in and check-out procedure is simple and easy for the patients and remember to be patient and empathetic towards all your patients.

Lighting and Ambience

The right lighting can do wonders to the look and feel of a place. If there is limited light in the waiting room or the rest of the rooms, it will make the place appear unwelcoming and claustrophobic. The best light is the natural light. If there are windows, especially in the waiting room, use them wisely. Let the natural light pour in. This would not just be beneficial for the patients, but also for your staff as they won't have to spend their entire day working under artificial lights. Natural light has been reported to enhance alertness and productivity. If there aren't enough windows, use artificial lights to brighten up the waiting room. As for examination and consultation rooms, dim lights are the best. Moreover, you might also need spotlights or other

stronger lights for conducting examinations.

Take-Home Message

➢ The interior of your private practice plays an important role in making your patients comfortable and at ease. It is up to you to make them feel relaxed right from the minute they enter your private clinic.

➢ The first impression of your place can do wonders. Ensure that you make your private practice visually appealing for your patients.

➢ Make sure that the doorway or entryway to the room is clear and open so it would feel more inviting.

➢ It is best to have a flooring to give it a professional feel and also place some rugs to make the place cozy and warm.

➢ Your aim should be to help the patients relax and feel welcoming; it is best to place colorful, heartwarming artwork on the walls.

➢ You might want to block the sounds from the surgeries you may be conducting to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the patients.

➢ If you really want to have a pleasing smell in your private practice, it is best to opt for essential oil diffusers as it would also help in keeping the air clean.

➢ Offering some snacks, mints, water, tea and coffee can make the patients feel welcomed in your private practice.

➢ The best thing to do is to provide a number of comfortable seating options around the room.

➢ You can also place a bookshelf filled with books and magazines so that the patients can keep themselves occupied while they wait.

➢ It is important to take care of your patients privacy when they visit your private clinic.

➢ It is important for you to help them lower their stress levels by providing a comfortable and soothing environment.

➢ The right lighting can do wonders to the look and feel of a place. The best light is the natural light. If there are windows, especially in the waiting room, use them wisely. Let the natural light pour in.

Chapter 18
Selecting and Purchasing Equipment for Your Medical Practice

"One machine can do the work of fifty ordinary men. No machine can do the work of one extraordinary man."

- Elbert Hubbard

Opening your own private practice means you have to equip it with the right medical equipment and supplies. Depending on your specialty as well as the services you want to provide your patients, you have to make sure that your private practice has all the necessary medical supplies and equipment to offer those services. It is not mandatory to purchase each and every expensive equipment for your medical practice at the beginning. Rather, there are plenty of places that offer medical equipment and supplies at cheaper prices if you make a group purchase. All you need to do is make smart decisions and avoid being hasty.

Aside from the medical equipment and supplies, your private clinic would also require other tools to make it easier for you and your entire staff to manage all the processes. Equipping your office with the right technology will also help in enhancing all the procedures and processes within the practice. However, it can get challenging to make the right choice from the countless options available in the market. This chapter will help you in determining ways you can find the right equipment for your private practice.

Determining the Needs

First things first, you have to list down the things you need to perform the medical services. Determine all the medical supplies and equipment you and your staff would need to do the duties efficiently. What are the most important machines or equipment? For instance, if you are in the field of ophthalmology, you would need the right instruments and supplies to perform cataract surgeries and/or to check the details of your patient's eyes. You would require examination chairs, auto-refractometer, non-contact tonometer, indirect ophthalmoscope, operating microscope, phacoemulsification

machine, micro-surgical equipment and more. Note down all the things so that there are no chances that you miss out on anything.

Creating a Budget

Another important thing you need to do is to create a budget. While these medical equipments might not be cheap, you can still get them at good prices. You need to figure out a realistic amount that you can invest in these equipment.

A budget will help you in prioritizing the things you need. Place the most important instrument or equipment at the top and start noting down other items as per their level of priority. You can purchase the most important equipment and supplies and then focus on the less important ones. You can always purchase other equipment gradually as your private practice starts flourishing. Bear in mind that since you have just started your private clinic, there are bound to be unexpected expenses that will come your way. Therefore, create a budget accordingly.

Renting vs. Buying

If you are unable to afford the full price of the equipment, you can always consider renting them out. This is another crucial decision you will have to make – which equipment to purchase and which you can rent. This is dependent on the nature of your practice and what vision you have for your private practice. Renting comes with its own set of advantages and disadvantages. The biggest factor is the amount of money you would have to pay every month as rent. If it is used equipment, it would require regular maintenance as well. However, renting equipment means that you have an option to upgrade the equipment as required and also purchase one when you can. Renting is also less risky than purchasing, especially if you are opting to use equipment you haven't used before. Moreover, you would also have an option to adjust the payments and make flexible arrangements as per your requirements.

Medical Equipment: How to Negotiate with Companies to get the Best Deal?

Medical science is advancing rapidly and various cutting-edge technology equipment are now available to help doctors pursue their clinical-surgical work. Negotiation represents an important tool to get the best possible deal from the medical equipment manufacturers. In order to get the best possible

deal, the doctor can follow some of the following methods:

I. Ask for a list of other doctors using the same equipment. Call some of the users and ask for the details and performance of the equipment. Ask specifically about the post-delivery (after-sale) services done by the company. Ask the price as well given by the company, but this can be very variable.

II. Get the demo unit of the equipment whenever possible. Use the equipment for 5 to 7 days and see its performance.

III. Make a group of 3-4 doctors who need to buy the same equipment

to negotiate and get the best price for the equipment.

IV. Always discuss extending the warranty from 1 to 2 years.

V. Discuss and freeze the price of AMC or CMC while buying the equipment.

VI. You can consider buying the equipment by the bundling of surgical items like Intraocular lenses, viscoelastic solutions for ophthalmic equipment.

VII. For pharmaceutical products (drugs, eye drops and other disposable items), always discuss and negotiate the best possible scheme provided by the company.

VIII. Once the equipment is delivered, always inspect it carefully (serial number, month and year of manufacture, etc) and sign the installation report after satisfaction and seeing its performance.

IX. Always write details of the complete deal on paper and share this with the company's office-bearers. Some of the company's employees may make verbal promises. These verbal promises will not hold any ground. Also, the company employee may change the company, so you must have a written agreement from the company about the terms of the agreement and ensure that all the details about the after-sales service, AMC, CMC charges, etc. are clearly mentioned.

X. If the equipment is not working properly, always complain in writing (by email), so you can retrieve it later if required.

XI. Always go for CMC or AMC or take breakdown insurance for your equipment.

Deciding the Tech Options

Aside from deciding which medical equipment and supplies to purchase, you would also have to decide the best technology for your private practice. Here are the most common things you would need:

Computers

In this technologically driven era, you can't imagine managing all your patients' appointments, medical records and reports on paper. You have to invest in computers so that the entire staff can easily access and update the patients' records. It will also enhance the productivity and performance of the private clinic.

Laptops

Laptops are another option for those staff members who don't have a dedicated office space to work in and have to be on a go. Laptops can easily be stored in their bags and lockers when not in use and are easy to carry around. You might need these for specific staff members or places.

Tablets

These are perfect for doctors and nurses, especially when they are on rounds to do patients checkup. Tablets are easy to use and can be used to quickly add in all the patients details and updates right while talking to the patient. You can assign a tablet for each examination room as well as for the help desk. This will enable the doctors and help desk staff to quickly lookup patients' details, make updates and modifications, look up information or check on the appointments.

Smartphones

This might not be necessary but there are many organizations and health care institutions that offer their staff smartphones with official numbers so that they can be on call. These work phones allow people to keep their personal life and work-life separate. For instance, many simply keep their work phones at hand while at work so that people from work can easily contact them while their personal phones can be switched on after their working hours. This helps them avoid distractions.

Other Technology

There are various other devices that your private practice would need to enhance the workings and process in the office. These might include recording devices, calculators, printers, security devices, electronic entry systems as well as card payment machines.

There are so many things you would need to make decisions on. In order to ensure that you make the right ones, make sure that you prioritize everything. Furthermore, you also must shop around and compare prices to get yourself the best possible deals.

Take-Home Message

➢ Opening your own private practice means you have to equip it with the right medical equipment and supplies.

➢ Getting the right equipment doesn't have to be expensive. There are plenty of places that offer medical equipment and supplies at cheaper prices for medical institutions.

➢ Equipping your office with the right technology will also help in enhancing all the procedures and processes within the practice.

➢ First things first, you have to list down the things you need to perform medical services.

➢ Another important thing you need to do is to create a budget.

➢ If you are unable to afford the full price of the equipment, you can always consider renting them out.

Chapter 19
Launching and Growing with Marketing Strategies

"Everyone lives by selling something."

- Robert Louis Stevenson

Designing Marketing Strategies

Successful marketing initiates with a well-informed, well-researched and well-thought-out marketing strategy. It helps you in defining your business goals, mission and vision, while also outlining the steps you must take for achieving those goals. The marketing strategy you create for your private practice is what would affect the ways in which you run it. Therefore, the marketing strategy must be planned properly.

A marketing strategy is a comprehensive and wide-reaching planning tool that helps in:

- Determining your business and the services and products you offer
- Highlighting the role and position of your services and products in the market
- Conducting research on your competition and patients
- Highlighting the tactics you must utilize
- Enabling you to create a plan and ways to measure its effectiveness

The right marketing strategy can set the goals and direction of your marketing, making it different from a marketing plan which highlights the certain steps you need to take in order to implement the marketing strategy.

A good marketing strategy would assist in determining the goals for your business and creating a stronger reputation for your services and products. Following are the crucial things you need to consider in order to create the right marketing strategy for your private practice and to ensure its growth and prosperity:

Determine Business Goals

In order to create your marketing strategy, you need to identify the goals of

your business so one can create marketing goals to support them. Your goals might be to:

- Enhance awareness about your private practice's services
- Reaching out to your specific target market
- Enhancing the reputation of your private practice

Whatever your goals are, you need to ensure that they are as specific as they can possibly be; this will help in measuring the outcome effectively. The best way to ensure that the goals you create are targeted is to use the SMART goal-setting approach (Figure 19.1). This approach helps you to make goals that are:

Specific – clearly state what must be achieved

Measurable – must have tangible ways to assess the outcome

Achievable – goals must be realistic as per you and your workers' abilities as well as the company's budget

Relevant – must be specific to your business and help you improve

Time-Bound – goals must have a deadline or a time frame in which they must be achieved

Figure 19.1: SMART Goals to Grow the Medical Practice

Highlight Marketing Goals

You need to highlight the marketing goals which must be based on the business goals you have defined above. These are the goals that will motivate your team and enable you to set targets for your success. Some examples of marketing goals can be:

- Market development (spreading awareness about your services to new markets)
- Market penetration (highlighting more services to your current market)

These goals may be short term or long term but it is important that they are measurable and clear, while also having a set time frame to be achieved. Ensure that the strategies you employ are also measurable and practicable. Remember that a marketing strategy won't be changed annually but can be modified as you achieve your goals. It is also possible that you might have to revise your strategy in case of external changes that might occur because of new technology or new competitor or any change in products and services.

Conduct Research

Research is one of the most important elements of a marketing strategy. You must collect relevant data and information about the health care market, specifically your niche for instance ophthalmology. You need to determine the demographics, social trends, growth and size of the market. It is essential to keep a tab on the market so that you are aware of changes that might occur with time. This will help you in making your strategy more targeted and relevant.

Understand Potential Patients

You would also have to utilize the market research you conducted for developing the profile of your potential patients that you would want to target so that you can understand their needs. This profiling will help reveal their behavior, the choice of health care facilities, what they consider while deciding their health care needs and more.

It is important to regularly review these trends to keep your strategy updated or else you would miss opportunities and might not be relevant in your marketing message. If you are hoping to target newer patients, ensure that your marketing strategy also enables you to maintain your existing patients.

Assess Competitors

Likewise, you must also create a profile of your competitors as part of your marketing strategy. You can do this by identifying their marketing tactics, pricing, supply chains and services.

This will help in identifying the competitive advantage of your private practice, things that set you apart from the competitors. It is also essential to highlight the weaknesses and strengths of your private practice to enhance your performance.

Create Strategies as Per Marketing Goals

Next, start listing your targeting markets and devising strategies to not just

attract but also to retain them. For instance, your goals might be to enhance awareness about a particular disorder and to encourage individuals to come for screening. The strategies for this might include enhancing your private practice's presence on social media, sharing information about the disorder, regularly updating the followers about your services, posting awareness messages in local newspapers and magazines.

Utilize the 7 Ps of Marketing

You can determine the marketing mix of your private practice by utilizing the 7 Ps of Marketing. When you opt for the ideal marketing through physical evidence, process, people, place, promotion, price and product, the marketing strategy you create will be successful.

Check the Ideas

Once you have created your marketing strategies, you need to test them to ensure that they would work effectively. It is essential that you test those ideas, otherwise, implementing them won't do any good to your business. Testing them will enable you to identify if there is a need for changes or modifications in the strategy.

The right marketing strategy will help you to spread awareness about your private practice and help it grow.

Interacting with Potential Clients

Communicating and interacting with your potential patients is vital to educate them about the products and services you offer at your private practice. However, in order to enhance and promote effective communication throughout your private practice, you need to have a look at your communication strategies and then you can work on the means of reaching out and interacting with your target patients. Your main aim should be to equip yourself with the right information and knowledge to become an effective communicator.

Following are some useful communication strategies that can help you in creating the right communication plan that can be implemented throughout your private practice and help you and your staff to efficiently interact with both existing and potential patients.

Remember the 7 C's

Begin with the basics. When you strike a conversation with your potential patients, it is highly likely that you don't know them personally. Therefore, to

enhance the communication, you should focus on the 7 Cs (Figure 19.2). These would work as a guide throughout your communication with your potential patients and help you bond with them.

These 7 Cs are as follows:

Clear – it is essential to have straightforward, simple and coherent communication.

Consistent – stable and unchanging messages showcase reliability.

Credible – narrating explicit truths assist in gaining and maintaining trust.

Confident – self-assured poise helps in enhancing your impression of others

Civil – showing courtesy makes a major impact.

Concise – select terms that can share your point clearly.

Compassionate – compassion and empathy strengthens the bond.

C's	Relevance
Credibility	Builds trust
Courtesy	Improves relationships
Clarity	Makes comprehension easier
Correctness	Builds confidence
Consistency	Introduces stability
Concreteness	Reinforces confidence
Conciseness	Saves time

Figure 19.2 : The 7 Cs of Communication

The four traits, compassionate, civil, confident and credible, speaks of the individual that delivers the message. Your patients would want to interact with a humble, kind and authentic health care professional who is considerate towards their feelings and is confident in their abilities.

The three traits, concise, consistent and clear, explain the ways you can make a digestible and understandable message. Being simple would be appreciated by your patients as it means clarity in the message and will also encourage them to engage in the conversation.

Be Aware of Your Body Language

Body language is also a very essential part of communication but is the

most neglected and overlooked element. How many times have you sensed an individual being uptight and closed, uncomfortable and tense or friendly and open? Even when they appear to be speaking calmly or are not even speaking, there are certain signs that make these things noticeable. It is important to keep an eye out for body language and facial expressions as they can tell you a lot about your patient. It can also help change the way you interact in order to make them comfortable and become more engaged in the conversation.

It is important that you use positive body language when you interact with your patients and their family members. Here are some useful techniques that can help portray a positive body image:

Eye Contact – It is highly recommended that you maintain eye contact when talking to the patient or their family members. This makes an instant connection among individuals. Moreover, it also makes it easy to attract their attention, encourage them to keep listening and convey your message more effectively.

Not Crossing your Arms – When insecurity strikes, it is human nature that we instantly comfort or protect ourselves. This is what happens when you cross your arms, it showcases that you are protecting yourself, defending yourself or distancing yourself from the patients. This could be off-putting to the individuals you are engaging with.

Smiling – A smile goes a long way. It gives a kind and welcoming impression to your patients and their family members. The patients are already tensed when they enter a health care institution; having a smiling health care provider can put them at ease. A smile can trigger a positive reaction from the individuals you want to interact with.

Notice Your Feet – Your feet should be pointing towards the individual you are talking to. Notice their feet too, are they pointing towards you? That means they are interested in what you are saying. However, if you notice their feet pointing away from you, it means they are going to escape from the conversation soon. You have a few minutes to get their attention.

It is also best to mirror the positive body language of the individuals you are interacting with. It shows that you understand what they are saying and that you are attentive to them. Ensure that you are sincere and subtle in your movements.

Finally, never check your phone when you are talking to someone. It might make the individual feel that they are not important or that you have better things to do than interact with them. It can make your patients feel uncomfortable and not understood.

Use Your Words Wisely

Your words can have a major impact on people, which is why it is important that you choose them wisely. Being a health care professional, your patients would be paying a lot of attention to what you say. Always use positive words to keep them calm and hopeful. Repetition is also a good way of planting a positive seed.

Your patients would know that you are a reliable person to interact with and someone who would be compassionate towards them. The words you use will help in forming a trusting and strong bond with your patients. Be encouraging and kind whenever you interact with your patients and their loved ones.

However, it is not wise to give them false hope. Be straight with them, but use kind words instead of being harsh.

Approaching Your Patients to Engage

Here are a few ways to positively approach and interact with your patients and form a positive relationship with them:

Understand Your Audience

Now that you understand how to effectively speak to your patients, both through body language and verbally, it is time to determine the best means of creating and maintaining positive communication. The best way to do this is by understanding your patients better. While you would know their medical history and present health condition, you should make some effort to get to know them at a personal level as well.

This surely doesn’t mean that you have to know their life story. You can talk about their kids, their favorite sports team or anything. The best way to do that is to actually listen to them; most of the time, patients mention some small details about their lives which you can further ask about. This shows them that you are actually listening and also helps form a stronger bond with them.

Here are a few things you can keep a lookout for as these are the things patients usually mention in their interactions with health care providers:

- The daily challenges being faced by the patient, may be due to their illness or some other reason.
- Ways you can assist the patients to ease their urgent issue.
- Is there a way you can help them with issues that are making their lives difficult?
- Any hobbies, likes and dislikes they share with you.

A major part of getting to know your patients is to place yourself in their position so that you can empathize with their situation. That will help you in understanding them better and will help you in determining the right ways to help them. When you get to know your patients better, it is highly possible that you might find an even better treatment plan than you had already created for them.

Listen Closely

Listen, listen and then listen some more. Whether you are talking to your patients, their family members or your colleagues, pay close attention to whatever they say. Some of the best and productive conversations are the ones where you actually hear and understand what the other person is saying and why they are saying it. According to Epictetus, a Greek philosopher, *"We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak."*

The more you listen to your patients, the better you would be able to diagnose the problem and come up with the best treatment plan for them.

To be a good listener, you must:

- Maintain eye contact with the patient.
- Avoid interrupting them when they are talking, unless you need to clarify some details about what they said.
- Pay close attention, not just to what they say but also their facial expression and body language.

It is rather easy to come to your own assumptions, thoughts and ideas even before the other person has finished talking. There are many doctors who don't even bother letting the patients finish what they have to say and they immediately diagnose the problem. No matter how skilled and experienced you are, you must listen attentively to what your patients have to say in order to effectively treat them. It is highly possible that you might miss some

crucial points or symptoms if you don’t pay attention to them or if you interrupt them midway.

Furthermore, the patients would be more open with you if they feel they are being paid attention to and that you are giving them importance. The more open and comfortable they are in discussing their problems, the easier it would be to determine the appropriate treatment plan for them.

So, what would be the main aim of listening?

It is to understand your patients, to show them that you are paying attention to them and to demonstrate that you do care about them. This helps in forming stronger and open relationships with your patients and it creates a trusting bond between you and them.

You must keep in mind that being an effective communicator is crucial in every aspect of your life. Effective communication with your patients, your staff and even your family and friends is essential in maintaining good relationships. Being the owner of your private practice, it is even more important for you to be a good (active) listener and communicator to ensure your vision and objects can be understood and followed by others (Figure 19.3).

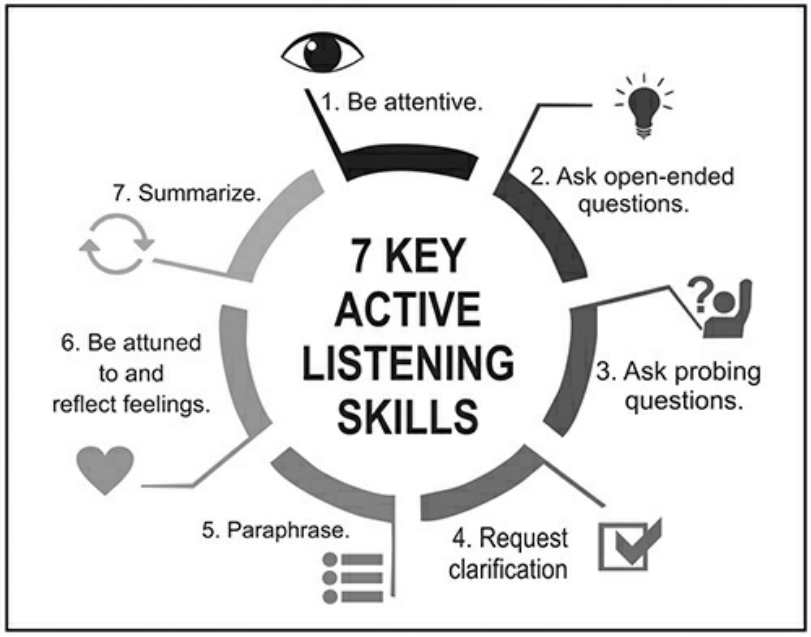


Figure 19.3 Summarizes the Active Listening Skills while Interacting with Patients

Effective Advertising Strategies and Tools

Whether your private practice is already established or you are just starting out, creating a marketing strategy is essential in order to spread the word about your startup. This helps in spreading the information about your private practice to your target audience so that they know when and how to reach you when they need to.

You need to keep in mind that the outcome from your marketing efforts will not happen overnight. It will take time, especially when involved in digital marketing. It requires time and effort to create a following on social media and to spread your message through traditional marketing means. That is why it is highly recommended that you initiate your marketing efforts a month or so before you open the doors of your private practice for your patients.

To do this, it is important that you are prepared.

Researching The Target Audience

The first thing you need to do is to research the profile of target market. What are your ideal patients? For instance, if you are an ophthalmologist, your ideal patients would be the individuals suffering from eye disorders or diseases. You need to determine their demographics like where they live, what they do, what is their age, their income, etc. This will help you formulate the right marketing content to attract them. It doesn't necessarily have to be about eye diseases and disorders, you can also include ways to care for eyes or how people should wear and care for contact lenses. This type of content can help in spreading awareness about eye issues, eye care, while also establishing you as a market leader.

Aside from this, for digital marketing, you would also have to include the right keywords in the content so that your content gets the maximum reach. There are plenty of ways you can design the content for your marketing once you have determined your ideal target audience. This will also help you in deciding which medium you can use to spread the message.

Creating a Social Media Presence

The more social media followers you have before the launch of your private practice is the better. When you grow and expand your social media presence, it also creates a buzz about the launch of your private practice. Another great way of spreading the word about your private practice and to expand your social media presence is to connect with influencers in related fields and collaborate with them to spread the word (Figure 19.4).

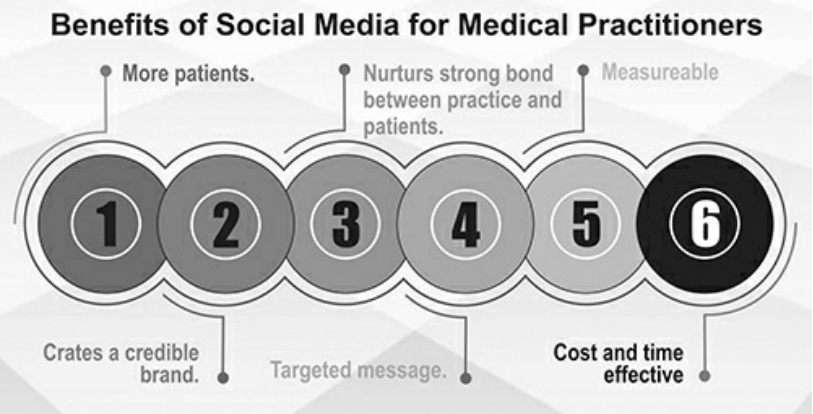


Figure 19.4: Benefits of Social Media for Medical Practitioners

Establishing a Ready-To-Go Content for Marketing

It is highly recommended that you create content for your marketing beforehand so that you already have a line up before your launch. This way you will have ready-to-go content for all your marketing requirements and you won't have to deal with creating new content during the initial phases of launching your private practice. Your marketing plan can include content like videos, infographics, eBooks and blogs. Also, make sure that your private practice has a professional-looking website even before the launch. All the content created must include relevant SEO to reach the maximum audience.

Building an Email Marketing Campaign

Making a contact list of potential patients can give you a leg up for your email marketing campaign. Encourage your followers on social media platforms to visit your website and sign up. This will help you in collecting the email addresses and you can send updates to them about the launch of your private practice and share information and details about the services and products you will offer. Make sure that you send them relevant and high-quality content once or twice a week and avoid spamming their inboxes as this will surely result in losing potential clients.

There are various ways in which you can advertise and market your private practice. As mentioned earlier, the best way to get your startup ahead is to start the marketing campaign before you launch your private practice as this will spread the word about your business. Pre-launch marketing efforts help in accelerating the rate at which your business can grow. It will earn you visibility and even create excitement among the target audience about the launch of your private practice. With the right strategies and techniques, the name of your private practice will already be in your target audience's mind

before you launch it.

Take-Home Message

➢ Successful marketing initiates with a well-informed, well-researched and well-thought-out marketing strategy.

➢ The marketing strategy you create for your private practice is what would affect the ways in which you run it.

➢ A good marketing strategy would assist in determining the goals for your business and creating a stronger reputation for your services and products.

➢ In order to create your marketing strategy, you need to identify the goals of your business so as to create marketing goals to support them.

➢ The best way to ensure that the goals you create are targeted is to use the SMART goal setting approach.

➢ Research is one of the most important elements of a marketing strategy.

➢ You need to determine the demographics, social trends, growth and size of the market.

➢ You would also have to utilize the market research you conducted for developing the profile of your potential patients that you would want to target so that you can understand their needs.

➢ Likewise, you must also create a profile of your competitors as part of your marketing strategy.

➢ Listing your target markets and devising strategies to not just attract but also to retain them.

➢ Once you have created your marketing strategies, you need to test them to ensure that they would work effectively.

➢ Communicating and interacting with your potential patients is vital to educate them about the products and services you offer at your private practice.

➢ Your main aim should be to equip yourself with the right information and knowledge to become an effective communicator.

➢ Body language is also a very essential part of communication but is the most neglected and overlooked element.

➢ Your words can have a major impact on people, which is why it is important that you choose the words wisely.

➢ A major part of getting to know your patients is to place yourself in their position so that you can empathize with their situation.

➢ The more you listen to your patients, the better you would be able to diagnose the problem and come up with the best treatment plan for them.

➢ You must keep in mind that being an effective communicator is crucial in every aspect of your life.

➢ Whether your private practice is already established or you are just starting out, creating a marketing strategy is essential in order to spread the word about your startup.

➢ The best way to get your startup ahead is to start the marketing campaign before you launch your private practice as this will spread the word about your business.

Chapter 20
How to Create a Strong Online Presence of Your Medical Practice?

"I used to think that cyberspace was fifty years away. What I thought was fifty years away, was only ten years away. And what I thought was ten years away... it was already here. I just wasn't aware of it yet."

- Bruce Sterling

As the world is continuously evolving, it is essential for business owners to not stay static. This evolution mostly has to do with the web which is why you need to create a strong and consistent online presence if you want to reach the maximum of your target audience.

Having a web presence doesn't just mean creating a website and social media accounts. It doesn't stop there; it is important that you maintain a constant interaction with your audience by sharing important information about your private practice, offering general advice and tips about your related field and answering the queries of the people. In order to ensure that people know about the existence of your private practice and what it has to offer, you must actively work on establishing and maintaining your web presence.

People nowadays always lookup a business or a product/service online before they give it a try. Having a professional website makes the company legit. When people hear about your private practice, they are bound to search it online and if you don't have a professional website and social media pages, they would be reluctant to come to you. They are bound to find some other private practice instead. It is like if you don't have a web presence, you just don't exist. The website of the hospital should be easily accessible on smartphones (Figure 20.1).

61% of users
are unlikely to return to a site if they had trouble accessing it on mobile and
40% will visit
a competitor's site instead.

Figure 20.1: The Website should be Easily Accessible on Smartphones.

Utilizing Social Media Marketing

Social media is one of the most powerful ways you can reach your existing and potential patients (Figure 20.2). People are already following and interacting with major businesses, brands and health care facilities on social media. This shows that if you don't create a social media presence, it means you are missing out on a major chance of reaching out to your target audience.

Social media became popular after the success of Facebook and it kept on evolving and flourishing as many companies started utilizing these social media platforms for marketing purposes. From health care facilities to restaurants, home-based businesses and more, all have started benefiting from social media marketing. This has created a way for businesses to connect with their target audience on a personal level.

Tips for Effective Social Media Marketing
Try to add value to your online community
Use attractive visuals when posting content.
Be Timely and consistent.
Choose your platforms carefully
Join relevant online forums and groups.
Define your business goals.
Encourage reviews from patients

Figure 20.2: Tips for Effective Social Media Marketing

In order to effectively utilize social media marketing for your private practice, you need to consider the following tips:

Humanizing your Practice

By utilizing social media, your private practice becomes personalized and relatable to your target audience. People prefer engaging with people instead of intimidating and detached companies. Just like patients prefer to engage more with health care professionals that are kind and compassionate. They relate to them more and it is easier for them to be more open and comfortable with them. Similarly, interacting with your private practice on social media platforms, make it more comfortable for them to engage and relate to your private practice. They would start looking at your practice as a relatable entity that they can easily reach out to when they need to and it would be far easier for them to select your private practice when they need to visit a health care professional in your specialty since they already would be comfortable with you.

Incorporating Visual Media

One important thing to keep in mind is that it is far easier for individuals to remember images rather than facts. You must have heard the saying, *"A picture is worth a thousand words."* It is highly recommended that you utilize appropriate images to make your private practice more memorable. For this, you can make use of Instagram, a platform that has become popular because of its visually appealing marketing. The best thing about it is that you can easily share the content you post on Instagram to your other social media profiles like on Facebook, Twitter and more. Whether you share images of your newly built private practice to show off the ambience and modern facilities you have to offer, you can also make infographics of a disorder sharing basic facts and details about it to spread awareness; you can create a short video to explain a common health issue and how to prevent it and so on. There is a lot to play around with when posting visual media. It is one of the most effective ways of ensuring that your target audience, your followers and your fans keep your private practice in mind.

Getting to Know the Audience

Your entire social media marketing campaign must be based on your target audience. Just like traditional marketing and advertising, you need to understand your audience better and create content to attract them accordingly; you have to do the same thing when you create content for social media marketing. Being a health care facility, you can still utilize the same marketing tools that are used by other sectors and industries to

understand their audience. You can use surveys, polls and other research methods to ask questions and get opinions from your target audience. This will help you in understanding what your target audience is looking for and you would be able to create the right strategies to provide them with what they are looking for. The more you understand your audience, the better and more relatable your content would be for them.

Understanding the Media Tools

There are numerous ways that you can use social media marketing. The best social media tools are Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Even if you can't follow other social media platforms, make sure your private practice has a presence on these three platforms and also ensure that the profiles are active there. Aside from this, there are several apps and tools that can aid in boosting your social media skills. For instance, there are apps that can help you schedule a month's worth of posts on all your social media platforms.

This way you only have to spend a little bit of effort in scheduling your posts for the entire month and just take a few seconds to share the post when you want to. Some paid apps even do the posting for you; just schedule the time you want the post to be posted on social media platforms and even if you aren't online, that app will post the content for you.

Sharing a Simple and Strong Message

All through your social media marketing, it is important that you are promoting a clear, simple and strong message with your content. Keep in mind that an effective presence on social media must have a succinct message which leaves a lasting impression on your audience. Therefore, think about your private practice, the services you offer, the way you want to portray yourself to the audience, what the audience or potential patients want from you and then create an appropriate and clear message which resonates with your target audience.

Although social media market appears to be simple and easy to navigate, there are various things and strategies that can make a major difference between struggling to succeed and earning global recognition. Remember to be innovative and unique with your approach as whatever is new on social media is the most popular. You would require constant creativity and innovation to come up with some effective techniques.

Role of Social Media in Medical Tourism and Medical Treatment

Beyond Borders

We would like to share our experience on how social media can be used as a special tool for medical tourism by the doctor to reach out more widely and built new relationships and professional associations. These interactions can sometimes reach internationally and help in building bridges across borders in what is increasingly becoming a global village. We all know that technology has undergone a huge revolution in recent times and has also impacted the field of medical education and treatment. The place of big, unwieldy books has been taken over in many instances by slim computers and sleek smartphones. With communication becoming so fast, social media has caught on and has attracted hoards of users all over the world. These sites as well as others help us remain in touch with professional colleagues and stay abreast of the latest developments. With the availability of sophisticated and inexpensive recording and editing devices and software, surgical videos can now be easily made and shared with colleagues through various websites and social media.

Medical Tourism: Connecting Through YouTube

My interest in documentation and sharing eye surgery prompted us to make a YouTube channel dedicated to ophthalmic surgical videos (http://www.youtube.com/user/drsureshkpandey) which has attracted many views (100,000) and subscribers (20,000). This helped us make new connections with medical colleagues and it was our privilege to have 50 ophthalmologists come over to SuVi Eye Institute & Lasik Laser Center, Kota, India for training at high-volume eye center from USA, UK, Europe, Middle East, Azerbaijan and Australia. Their journey from a distant country to a non-metro Indian city (Kota, Rajasthan) is a testament to the rising influence of social media interactions.

Transcending Borders

While connecting with doctors from far away is a great experience, the real adventure of social media is in being able to connect with patients and the general public. The medical profession has always moved beyond borders, an example being Doctors Sans Borders and ORBIS aircraft being another glorious example of teaching and medical services beyond borders.

Medical Tourism: A Journey From Karachi to Kota

India and Pakistan share a troubled border despite many efforts for peace. Many patients, especially children, have come over to India from Pakistan to

receive medical treatment as well as surgical procedures at some big institutions. However, the story shared here is of Mr. Fahim Uddin, a software engineer (working at the Orthopedic and Medical Institute, Karachi, Pakistan), who was a myope and had developed cataracts at about 40 years of age. His own Internet search had led him to Intraocular Lens (IOL) websites and he decided he wanted a particular multifocal IOL (Tecnis Multifocal IOL, Johnson and Johnson, USA) that was not available in Pakistan at that time. He then searched for the IOL in India and found many videos that I had posted on the implantation of this IOL. He communicated with us through social media and after a few interactions, developed so much trust that he decided to come to India for the surgery.

Mr. Fahim came over on a medical VISA that was issued by the Indian Embassy in Karachi, Pakistan after thorough scrutiny. He underwent cataract surgery in both eyes with the multifocal IOL of his choice at SuVi Eye Institute, Kota in July 2012 and was extremely happy with the results. He even watched a Bollywood movie (Bol Bachchan) in the theater immediately after surgery and toured the city and was thrilled with the excellent vision he had at both, distance and near without glasses, with no significant night vision problems either. The fact that he had come over from Karachi, Pakistan for his eye surgery made him somewhat of a mini-celebrity and his visit was well covered by the local media. A program- 'Spreading Light Across the Border' (Aman Ki Roshni) was organized during his visit and Mayor of the City, the Inspector General of Police and some other prominent personalities of the city participated in it. The speakers emphasized that with the help of social media, the patient came to know about the Center in India and he undertook this journey from Karachi to Kota. His visit to India was a unique case of human trust and empathy that knew no boundaries, neither political nor religious. When it comes to interpersonal interactions, Indians and Pakistanis have always been very warm to each other and this was just another reinforcement of the need for the two neighbors to live like friendly neighbors.

Utilization of Social Media at our Practice

When a patient comes for a check-up at our practice (at SuVi Eye Hospital & Lasik Laser Center in Kota, Rajasthan, India), our team members ask him/her about the purpose of his visit and complaints related to eyes. They also ask him/her about the use of smartphone/digital devices. During the

conversation, the team member also shows the Facebook page related to the digital vision syndrome and asks him to like the page to get regular updates. We use staff members with good communication skills and soft-spoken staff to perform this job. While they are waiting for their detailed eye check-up, the staff also explains the history of the first artificial Intraocular Lens (IOL) implantation done at St Thomas Hospital in London (UK) by Sir Nicholas Harold Ridley. They are also told about the history of suture-less phacoemulsification cataract surgery done by
Dr. Charles David Kelman. They are also asked and explained about the Eye Bank and seek their support for the eye donation movement. Most patients are very happy to get the extra information and also extend their support for the social cause. They also give excellent feedback about our services on the Google Page of our Hospital and this has helped our practice to become one of the highly-rated eye practices in India.

Website Designing

Health care organizations face expanded challenges since the web has become a growing and vital requirement for this sector. No matter which specialty you belong to, you would be faced with newer challenges with digital media since it keeps evolving and changing. Consumer behavior, changing marketplace and competition are all major parts of this mix. In order to stay on top of this mix, the first and foremost thing you need to initiate the right way is your website. All industries have their own set of standards for websites. While most of them are rather similar, health care facilities must be mindful about the fact that the majority of individuals who visit their website are doing so because of an emergency or due to some health issue they urgently want to take care of.

This is the reason why, your private practice must aim to follow certain standards for their websites, including:

- Have easy navigation to help the users look through information quickly and easily.
- Offer commonly accesses files and information from a central location.
- Be easy to access on mobile devices.

When you are deciding on the website design and layout, make sure you keep these major points in your mind. If your website doesn’t incorporate these major elements, it won’t be able to accurately and quickly serve the

users in emergency situations which would make your website ineffective.

Here are some useful and effective tips that can help you in creating an ideal web design for your private practice's website:

Clear and Simple Navigation

Navigation is indeed the most important element in the web design of any website. However, for a private clinic, as mentioned above, a majority of the users would be in a hurry to get the information. Therefore, it is important that your website has easy navigation which is concise, clear and understood easily. If your website doesn't have easy and clear navigation, it is highly likely that the users would opt for a different website and thereby another private practice or health care facility.

Ideally, the web design must include a menu at the top of your homepage with 5 to 6 key items. When hovering on these items, the menu can expand to showcase more options that the users can click on to get more information.

For instance, the menu on your homepage can include items like Staff, Services, Patients, Visitors and Contact Us. When the users hover on the option of Patients, the menu can show more options like Emergency Information, Inpatient Procedures, Forms for New Patients and more. This will help in keeping your menu concise and will help in maintaining a clean home page. This also provides a clear structure and format which is easier for all users to follow and understand.

This will further assist in keeping the users engaged with the content; they would know where to get the relevant information they are looking for and would motivate them to spend more time browsing your website. As a result, there would be fewer bounce rates and positive signals would be sent to Google which can further enhance your efforts for SEO.

Mobile-Friendly and Responsive Design

The website design for health care organizations and facilities must follow the mobile-friendly standards of today. If the website isn't responsive, meaning if it doesn't resize automatically to show the content without the need for excessive scrolling and pinch zooming on mobile devices, it must be immediately redesigned.

A responsive design is a web design that is virtually future proof, that enables your website to adjust dynamically to properly display on devices and browsers of all sizes and shapes. This will keep individuals, who are

most likely searching on their phones in a hurry, to avoid scrolling and zooming in and out to find the address and phone number of your private practice.

This will ensure that the website of your private practice offers a reliable experience to anyone who visits, right now or in the future, through whichever device they are using.

Mobile Optimization

Majority of people search online using their mobile phones since it is readily available and takes a few seconds to search on the web instead of on laptops and computers. This indicates that it is essential to also make your website mobile-friendly. The recent Google update also takes into account the mobile-friendliness of the websites in order to rank the websites. Therefore, make sure that you create a website that is mobile optimized otherwise you will merely have a website that isn't reaching its full potential.

Inclusion of Important Details

It is essential that the website of your private practice includes all relevant information and details which the users might require. For instance, it should mention the exact location of your private practice, operating time for all offices and departments, all the relevant phone numbers as well as email addresses. The users must access all this information through your home page, under the Contact Us item on the main menu. You can even place this information on the website's footer so that the users can quickly scroll down to get the contact details of your private practice.

When you make this information clear and easily accessible, it ensures that all the users coming to your website in case of some emergency can reach your health care facility quickly without losing precious time in trying hard to locate the number and address.

You must also make sure that your contact details are the same everywhere, including social media platforms, Google+ listing and any other pages where you ought to share the basic information and contact details of your private practice.

Avoid burying this vital information within your website as this is a surefire way of sending off your potential patients to your competitors.

Effective Tips and Strategies

Following are some effective tips and strategies that can help you in

establishing a strong web presence for your private practice:

Setting Goals

Now that you realize the importance of web presence for your private practice, you need to start planning for it. What you will do, how you will do it and when will you do it?

You need proper planning and for that you need goals. Start setting your web presence goals and create a strategy to achieve those goals accordingly. Make sure you set clear and realistic goals and ensure you have strong objectives and aims. Once you have created your goals, start breaking them down into smaller goals.

No matter how big your goal is, you can easily achieve it if you plan it well. Set attainable timelines to achieve all short-term and long-term goals. Prioritize your goals so that you know which things are more important and can’t be put off.

Determine the steps you would need to take in order to achieve all those specified goals. This way you will have a clear and strong map that will take you towards your ultimate goal and help you achieve and maintain a stronger web presence.

Working on Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

SEO is one of the most crucial things that can help in attaining a strong web presence for your private practice. Your website and social media profiles must act as central spots where the target audience comes to attain information about your private practice, the services you offer and how to contact your private practice. Unfortunately, this can’t happen if your website is lost in a sea of content online. But there is a way to solve this through Search Engine Optimization (SEO).

Utilizing the right SEO techniques and strategies can take your website from the very bottom of the search results right to the top of Google search results. It is essential that you must at least know the basics of SEO in order to create your content accordingly.

If you are not aware of SEO or don’t fully understand what it does, its importance and the way it works, here are some basic facts to help you:

- *What* – the main aim of SEO is to keep your website easier to find on search engines and place it on their organic results instead of their paid

results.

- *Why* – individuals trust and rely on search engines; therefore, whichever websites appear on top of the page results are the ones that get the highest traffic.
- *How* – you can utilize search engine friendly means for improving the website so that it appears on the top.
- *Who* – all businesses utilize SEO strategies and techniques so that their target audience can easily find them on the web.
- *When* – this is a continuous process which means you need to be consistent with your SEO efforts. It is essential to ensure that information on your website is correct and current. Search engines prefer newer content which means, regularly adding new content on your website will do wonders.
- *Where* – all search engines including Bing, Yahoo and of course Google. These search engines help in connecting individuals throughout the world to get the information they need.

Creating Value and Being Consistent

Once you have established your website and social media profiles, it is important that you be consistent with the efforts of enhancing your web presence. Make sure you have relevant content ready and post valuable content for your target audience. This will help in maintaining the credibility of your private practice and create a niche for yourself as one of the leaders in your field.

Commenting On Forums

In order to improve your web presence, you need to actively participate in various relevant online forums related to your specialty. You can also write guest blogs for popular and established medical websites as this will also help in establishing you as an ‘influencer.’ Moreover, you would be able to direct tariff from those websites to your own website.

Offering Special Discounts

Who doesn’t love discounts, coupons, free samples and products? You can offer coupons or discounts on normal procedures or first consultation fees which will enhance the image of your private practice online and encourage the existing and potential patients to visit your private clinic for routine

checkups.

Focusing on One Tool

Using all tools online might have worked for some businesses, but it might not work for you. The strategy of putting your businesses everywhere online might actually damage your businesses instead of building them up. How is that possible? If you stay inactive on social media, it has a negative impact on your business since your followers would view it as a disregard for not communicating with them. Since it is rather difficult to manage and give equal attention to all social media accounts, it is best to pick one or at maximum, three to focus upon.

Keeping Track

How do you measure the success of the efforts you are putting in? By keeping a track of them. You can't expect to just create a strategy, implement it and leave it assuming that it would work. You need to constantly monitor the process of the posts you make, determine whether your web presence is growing steadily or not, whether your likes, comments and followers are increasing or not. Keeping track of all of this can help you determine how much progress you have made, what changes you have to do and when to modify or change your strategy.

Being Patient

Another most important thing is to be patient. You can't expect overnight success. It is essential that you make efforts and not be hasty. Keep in mind that your hard work will gradually pay off. You must ensure that you have realistic expectations. However, don't be afraid to experiment. There aren't any hard and fast rules or right or wrong ways of utilizing social media. Be as creative as you can be and determine what works best for you and your target audience.

Tools to Grow an Online Presence for Doctors

Learning how to grow an online presence for doctors is a true challenge. It is something that must be done above and beyond running your medical practice. Your team may be able to help to grow your online presence, but a great deal of the work must also be done by the doctors themselves. Online media tools for doctors are confusing and complex. Many doctors feel overwhelmed by just learning all the names of each site, let alone using them.

Here are few tools to grow an online presence for doctors:

1) Doximity

More than 500,000 health care professionals have joined and use this social media platform that is exclusively for the medical community. Create an account to grow your influence within the medical community. You can also catch up on the latest medical news updates and read journal articles directly on the site.

2) Scoop

Scoop is designed for content creators to share their new articles, videos and news all in one place. Doctors can benefit from this by going directly to the aggregated feeds. It is a great way to grow an online presence for doctors, as they can find the latest news to share on social platforms. Doctors have access to the latest ideas and trends and are able to share them. This gives you influence and a position as an authority in your field.

3) Mention

Think of mention as your virtual press agent. If you want to grow your online presence, Mention is a helpful tool to check out. The site is actually a set of tracking tools to help you monitor what people are saying about you on social platforms. It also tracks the activity of other online medical influencers and lets you connect with them. It also has an excellent blog for learning more about social media and online presence which can be very valuable for doctors.

4) Quora

If you want to be recognized as an online medical expert then take some time and answer important questions for patients and online searchers. You can think of Quora as the online FAQ center of the internet. Visit the section specifically for Medicine and Health Care to get a sense of what people want to know. The more you share, the more you can grow your online influence.

5) Hootsuite

To save time while trying to grow an online presence as a doctor, look no further than Hootsuite. Think of it as your personal assistant. The software can schedule your social posts and offer suggestions of valuable material to share. Hootsuite offers very affordable tools that will also monitor all your social media activity in one place. You can respond to comments, post updates and more from the site. An online presence for doctors and medical practice is very important to grow your practice during the current time

(Figure 20.3). The more you learn about this new world of online influence, the better you can compete and become known as a doctor of value and credibility in the world.

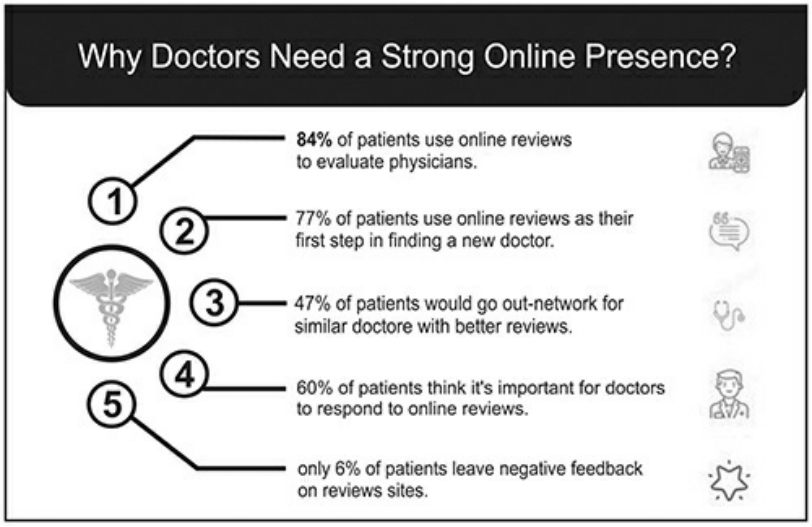

Why Doctors Need a Strong Online Presence?
84% of patients use online reviews to evaluate physicians.
77% of patients use online reviews as their first step in finding a new doctor.
47% of patients would go out-network for similar doctore with better reviews.
60% of patients think it's important for doctors to respond to online reviews.
only 6% of patients leave negative feedback on reviews sites.
1
2
3
4
5

Figure 20.3: Doctors Needs a Strong Online Presence

Take-Home Message

➢ In order to ensure that people know about the existing private practice and what it has to offer, you must actively work on establishing and maintaining your web presence.

➢ Social media is one of the most powerful ways you can reach your existing and potential patients.

➢ If you don’t create a social media presence, it means you are missing out on a major chance of reaching out to your target audience.

➢ By utilizing social media, your private practice becomes personalized and relatable to your target audience.

➢ It is highly recommended that you utilize appropriate images to make your private practice more memorable.

➢ Your entire social media marketing campaign must be based on your target audience.

➢ The more you understand your audience, the better and more relatable your content would be for them.

➢ All through your social media marketing, it is important that you are promoting a clear, simple and strong message with your content.

➢ If your website doesn’t have an easy and clear navigation, it is highly likely that the users would opt for a different website and thereby another private practice or health care facility.

➢ The website design for health care organizations and facilities must follow the mobile-friendly standards of today.

➢ It is essential to also make your website mobile-friendly otherwise you will merely have a website that isn’t reaching its full potential.

➢ It is essential that the website of your private practice should include all relevant information and details which the users might require.

➢ Utilizing the right SEO techniques and strategies can take your website from the very bottom of the search results right to the top of Google search results.

➢ Once you have established your website and social media profiles, it is important that you be consistent with the efforts to enhance your web presence.

Chapter 21
Creating an Organizational Culture for Your Medical Practice

"Corporate culture is the only sustainable competitive advantage that is completely within the control of the entrepreneur. Develop a strong corporate culture first and foremost."

— David Cummings

How do you Create a Culture?

The culture of a company, especially in the initial years is tied inevitably to the values, background and personality of the owner as well as their vision for their company's future. This means that the corporate culture of your private practice is dependent on the vision, mission and values that you initially create. The way you conduct businesses would determine the rules of your private practice, the structure and the people you would hire.

Your values would become a major part of the culture of your private practice and will help set a path for your employees to follow. Your mission, values and vision would lead your private practice towards success.

Establishing a strong culture is essential for all businesses, no matter which sector they belong to. An environment of innovation, support and positivity lead to enhanced job satisfaction which mostly translates to increased revenues, satisfied patients and enhanced overall ranking of your private practice.

This is especially true in the health care sector in which the lives and health of the patients are on the line constantly. The advantages of palpable and positive corporate culture must not be understated. Creating respect and camaraderie in the health care field mostly require a different approach as compared to the typical small business or office-based team. It is not complicated to establish corporate culture, all it requires shared commitment, communication and vision.

Key Elements of a Strong Culture

Corporate or organizational culture is a set of beliefs which the company incorporates and utilizes in all areas of the business. The culture your private practice would be crucial for its overall success. There are various elements that form a strong culture. Following are some of the main elements you need to create the right corporate culture:

Core Values

Core values are not just mottos that you can get framed, hang on the walls and then forget about them. These values must be implemented in the strategies you utilize, the way you work and the decisions you make. These values work like guidelines if they are created, communicated and implemented in a consistent way. Core values are the behaviors that don't change even when the company and the management change. It is important that the core values you have created are effectively communicated to all the health care employees whom you hire in your private practice, from the very first day.

Camaraderie

Solidarity and unity are important within an organization. It is about better bonds and friendships among colleagues and employees. It is also about getting time out to relax and getting to know one another so that there is a sense of unity within the organization. This can be attained by hosting annual events, parties and other traditions that can give your employees an opportunity to relax and mingle with one another outside of the workplace. Moreover, this is also an opportunity to invite the families of your employees in order to get to know the people their loved ones work with.

Celebrate Achievements

It is important to recognize and appreciate the efforts your employees put in. When you regularly acknowledge the efforts and hard work your employees are putting in, it drastically increases their motivation levels. This also encourages them to work even harder and put in the extra effort. As a result, patient care and satisfaction increase tremendously. You can also host monthly events to recognize the highest performing employees and offer them incentives. An annual grand event can also be held to highlight the best performances and achievements of the year.

Respect

A strong organizational culture includes respecting one another. There is no discrimination or favoritism among employees of all levels and designations. Everyone should be respectful towards each other and motivate one another to accomplish their goals. Not just the employees should respect their management but the management should also respect the employees. This fosters a positive and safe environment for everyone.

Care

Showing your employees that they are genuinely cared for boosts their well-being and morale. It is important to be caring and compassionate towards all the employees and to be considerate enough to understand their problems. Offering solutions to the issues your employees are facing, instead of blaming them for when things go wrong, goes a long way. Providing financial aid to those in need, resolving transportation issues, providing health and life insurance and so many more things exhibit your care and concern for your team.

Commitment

Commitment is another major element of a strong corporate culture. However, like everything else, this also starts with you as the owner. You must show your commitment towards your private practice, your employees and also your patients. You must be committed to the cause of assisting your patients and making their good health your priority. When you set an example, all your employees will follow suit.

Communication

All organizations with a strong corporate culture have one thing in common – they have strong and solid communication. This means that they have open communication from upper-level employees to mid and lower-level employees. Everyone’s opinions and views are valued. It is essential to have an open-door policy so that employees are not hesitant to share their issues and problems. When your private practice has good communication, it will help you in avoiding conflicts and other work issues among the employees. Any changes or addition that is to be implemented must be shared with the employees beforehand and employees should also have a say in the decision making processes.

Performance

When an organization has a strong culture, it also tends to generate superior

performance results. It happens because all the employees are happy and content with the workplace which results in better work performance. Employees are more inclined to work together without any conflicts or issues.

Chronicles

Another important thing that fosters a strong corporate culture is that all the employees know their organization well; for instance, when it started, how it started and why was it started by the owner. They understand the story behind the creation of the company which makes them feel closer to the establishment. The close bond which is created due to this also helps in encouraging the employees to work harder and to work for the overall benefit of the company.

These are some of the major elements that form a strong corporate culture. Indeed, there are more factors involved depending on your private practice, but these are the most essential ones that help in making your private practice a positive and productive place for the employees to work at.

Take-Home Message

➢ The corporate culture of your private practice is dependent on the vision, mission and values that you initially create.

➢ Establishing a strong culture is essential for all businesses, no matter which sector they belong to.

➢ Creating respect and camaraderie in the health care field mostly requires a different approach as compared to the typical small business or office-based team.

➢ Corporate or organizational culture is a set of beliefs which the company incorporates and utilizes in all areas of the business.

➢ Core values work like guidelines if they are created, communicated and implemented in a consistent way.

➢ It is important to recognize and appreciate the efforts your employees put in.

➢ Everyone should be respectful towards each other and motivate one another to accomplish their goals.

➢ Showing your employees that they are genuinely cared for boosts their well-being and morale.

➢ When an organization has a strong culture, it also tends to generate superior performance results.

Chapter 22
Managing and Growing Your Team of Medical Practitioners

"There is immense power when a group of people with similar interests gets together to work toward the same goals."

- Idowu Koyenikan

Offering Training and Orientation

When you have selected your employees, it is important that they are properly prepared to start performing their jobs. And this is where training and orientation come in. Orientation means offering the new employees all the basic details about your private practice. Whereas, the training programs are utilized to ensure that the new employees have the right skills and knowledge to efficiently perform their jobs.

Both training and orientation programs are essential in the process of developing a flexible and committed workforce. Additionally, these plans also help save your employees' money while also providing higher returns to your private practice since if you invest in the training of your employees, your employees will reap the benefits. Unfortunately, training and orientation programs are typically overlooked. It is essential that you offer your employees these training and orientation programs.

Orientation

Orientation programs enhance the productivity rate of your employees and help in satisfying their desire to feel like a part of the organization. The HR department is typically responsible for conducting an orientation for the new employees and introducing them to the processes and benefits of working in the company. Moreover, the supervisors or team leaders finish up the process of orientation by introducing the new employees to their colleagues and helping them understand the tasks and responsibilities they are supposed to perform. Typically, a mentor or a buddy is assigned to the new employees to help those employees adjust.

Training

Merely hiring the employees and placing them on their jobs from day one doesn't result in success. In reality, even the existing employees might require training to brush up their skills and to update themselves about the latest changes and new trends in the market. Here are some indications that your existing employees might require training:

- Complains from coworkers or patients
- Increase in the number of questions
- Increase in accidents or safety violations
- Decrease in the productivity levels of the employee or the quality of their work
- Changes in the job responsibilities of the employee
- Introducing new processes or equipment

When you determine that your existing employees need training, it is important to create clear goals and objects of training which highlight the expected outcome. It is also essential that you communicate those goals and objectives clearly to the employees.

You must also bear in mind that training is merely one solution to problems in performances. If the main issue is low levels of training, external issues or poorly designed job, then no amount of training can help much with the problem.

Creating an Employee Handbook

The employee handbook is one of the most essential human resource tools of your private practice. It highlights the company rules, employment policies and other crucial information your employees need to understand for a successful tenure. Just like any other legal document, it is important to ensure that your handbook not just reflects the most recent laws of labors and social norms, but is also received well by your team.

Here are some important points to keep in mind when creating the employee handbook for your private practice:

Keeping it Updated and Current

Since laws are changing and might keep on changing, it is important to keep your employee handbook updated so that your entire private practice is up-to-

date according to the existing legislation as well as organizational policies. Moreover, it will also help you stay organized.

Ensuring Policies Support Organizational Practices

Handbooks must represent the demonstrated values and practices of your private practice. If this isn't the case, it would get difficult for you to defend any claims and lawsuits of unfair employment policies and practices. It is important that you review and modify the handbook twice annually. While reviewing your employment handbook, keep this question in mind, "Is this really the reality of our organization?" If the answer is no, then you need to make appropriate changes instantly.

Making it Concise

If you truly want your employees to actually read the handbook and be engaged, you need to make sure that it is at maximum 100 pages long. You should create a concise and simple handbook that doesn't scare your employees. If the procedure or policy feels too wordy or long, then it most definitely is, make it simpler and shorter.

Making it Mobile

Typically, organizations are used to print off everything and make the handbooks are bigger than they have to be with legalese and jargon. Keep in mind that nowadays, employees are mobile and so should be the employment handbook so that it is easily accessible to all no matter whether the employees are remote, on-field or at the workplace. This way, they are more likely to adapt the information provided in the handbook.

Being Flexible

There are many organizations that get trapped in trying to be specific in the handbooks. As a result, it ties them down and leaves little to no room for advancing the practices and policies. Remember, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to handle your employees. It is essential that you create the handbook with overarching concepts and ideas in mind, be specific where needed, but also as flexible as possible.

These are a few guidelines that will help you in creating the right employment handbook for your private practice.

Establishing an Appreciation and Recognition Plan

It is important to recognize the efforts your employees put in and appreciate

them for it. Starting an employee recognition plan is an ideal way to do this. Following are some steps you can follow to establish your own plan:

Determining Requirements for Rewards and Appreciation

Firstly you need to determine what would be the requirements for qualifying for this perk. Your employees need to know what they have to do in order to get their hands on the rewards. Decide the requirements and how often you want to implement this plan. A few factors you can consider are as follows:

- Can both part-time and full-time employees participate? What about interns and temps?
- Would there be a requirement for the employee to be a part of your private practice for a specific amount of time?
- Is the same employee eligible to get the reward two times consecutively?
- Are the employees involved in the process of selection eligible too?

Determining Ways of Selecting the Candidates

Next, you have to decide how will you select the candidates. Firstly, you must determine how you will get alerted about the exceptional performance of the employees or the ones that qualify. Will you go for a nomination system or you will opt for the number of patients or tasks successfully treated or completed by the employee? If you opt for the nomination system, then who will be responsible for nominating the employees? Moreover, how can you ensure that the nomination is unbiased and fair?

Secondly, you will also have to decide how will you shortlist the nominated or eligible employees. What would be the criteria? Will there be a voting system? Is there going to be a selection team? How will you create the rating criteria? These are some of the crucial things you would have to consider when you create an employee recognition plan. You must ensure that the entire system is fair and that all the employees have a fair chance to be qualified for it.

Choosing the Award or Reward

Now comes the fun part, determining what award or reward you would offer your employees. This can be a certificate or a customized trophy. You can even go for a bigger award if you have the budget. There are many organizations that also offer their employees discount vouchers, gift certificates and other such prizes. No matter what you select, ensure that the

award or reward is meaningful. Merely a pin saying ‘employee of the month’ or a ribbon with a ‘great job’ printed on it doesn’t matter much. You need to ensure that your employees understand what exactly they are being recognized for.

Announcing and Implementing the Plan

Once you have finalized the reward or award you want to hand out, it is time to make the announcement. Ensure that you make this announcement in a company wide meeting, while also sending a follow-up email that includes all the relevant details. Inform them about how they can qualify for the award system and when will the candidates be finalized. It is your job to get all your employees excited about this new perk.

Keep in mind that these basic steps can get you started with this employee recognition plan but you can think of new and innovative ideas as well. Customize your plan to make it fit the culture of your private practice. Having a regular employee recognition plan will gradually make your private practice the place your employees truly want to be and increase their satisfaction levels.

Take-Home Message

➢ When you have selected your employees, it is important that they are properly prepared to start performing their jobs.

➢ Both training and orientation programs are essential in the process of developing a flexible and committed workforce.

➢ Orientation programs enhance the productivity rate of your employees and help in satisfying their desire to feel like a part of the organization.

➢ When you determine that your existing employees need training, it is important to create clear goals and objects of training which highlight the expected outcome.

➢ The employee handbook is one of the most essential human resource tools of your private practice.

➢ Handbooks must represent the demonstrated values and practices of your private practice.

➢ It is important that you review and modify the handbook twice annually.

➢ It is essential that you create the handbook with overarching concepts and ideas in mind, be specific where needed but also be as flexible as

possible.

➢ Keep your employee handbook updated so that your entire private practice is up-to-date on the existing legislation as well as organizational policies.

➢ You should create a concise and simple handbook that doesn’t scare your employees.

➢ Employees are mobile and so should be the employment handbook, so that it is easily accessible to all no matter whether the employees are: remote, on-field or at the workplace.

➢ It is important to recognize the efforts your employees put in and appreciate them for it.

➢ Firstly you need to determine what would be the requirements for qualifying for this perk.

➢ Next, you have to decide how will you select the candidates.

➢ Now comes the fun part, determining what award or reward you would offer your employees.

➢ You need to ensure that your employees understand what exactly they are getting recognized for.

➢ Once you have finalized the reward or award you want to hand out, it is time to make the announcement.

➢ Keep in mind that these basic steps can get you started with this employee recognition plan but you can think of new and innovative ideas as well.

Chapter 23
Interaction and Communication with the Medical Practice Team

"When you hire people that are smarter than you are, you prove you are smarter than they are."

- R. H. Grant

Importance of Effective Communication

Communication plays a major role in the overall working of an organization. It is indeed the heart of all organizations. According to many studies, the companies that follow the practice of good communication are 3.5 times more successful and productive as compared to their competitors. This shows that it is essential to have a proper communication strategy for your private practice. Communication is even more essential in health care settings as the patients' lives and health depend on it. Without effective communication, there might be misinformation or confusion in the treatment plan which can result in worsening of the patients' health.

Aside from that, there are numerous other reasons why effective communication is important for your private practice, including:

Building Stronger Teams

When leaders are effective communicators, their team members or employees follow suit. When communication is strong, the team is able to follow the instructions and be more productive. When you incorporate good communication strategies within your private practice, this would result in improved performance and level of productivity among your employees. Moreover, it would also make decision making and problem-solving faster and easier if you have open dialogs where employees can share their opinions and views.

Reduced Chances of Misunderstandings

Lack of communication can lead to plenty of misunderstandings. Not only can this negatively affect the treatment of your patients, but it can also lead to

rumors and gossips which can ultimately derail an organization. With honest and open communication, you can ensure that everyone understands their responsibilities and any changes that might occur in the practice in the near future which can prevent confusion and fear.

Improved Patient Service

When you have a strong communication policy, you and your staff would know how to interact with your patients. You would understand how important it is to patiently listen to the patients as this can help with the right diagnosis and in creating an appropriate treatment plan. You can listen to your patients, answer their queries and help them understand the next steps. This will also help them in reducing their fear and nervousness.

Contributing to Company's Growth

Lack of proper communication can lead to a major decrease in productivity levels. Without effective external and internal communication, your private practice will keep on struggling to survive, no matter how strong your strategies are. Effective communication results in productivity which further assists in avoiding unnecessary delays in tasks.

Provides Transparency

With consistent communication both externally and internally, your private practice stays transparent. This helps in establishing trust in your private practice. Even when rough decisions or complex issues arise, you can save your private practice and your reputation by showcasing what and why things happen easily.

Enhanced Innovation

When all your employees are comfortable enough to share their opinions and ideas, the innovation and cooperation level of your private practice will be high. Additionally, if the employees are unable to share their ideas due to a lack of communication skills, this means the idea cannot be executed to its full potential. This also indicates that it is necessary that you offer training sessions and make communication easier for all the employees to be open.

Monthly, Weekly and Daily Meetings

Regular meetings are essential if you want effective communication practices to be followed within your private practice. The communication must be aligned and focused to ensure that any issues or potential issues are

highlighted and resolved. This shows that holding daily, weekly and monthly meetings are integral for the progress and prosperity of your private practice.

Let’s have a better look at these three meetings and why they are important:

Daily Meetings

The first type of meetings that you need to conduct are the daily meetings. These meetings are fast-paced and short meetings that you can hold each day for about 10 to 15 minutes. In these meetings, you can ask your team members productivity questions like:

- Tasks performed yesterday
- Any problems or hurdles that occurred
- Tasks to accomplish today
- Any potential issues that might be faced today

Holding these daily meetings enhances commitment, engagement and transparency. Remember, these meetings are not merely updates about the tasks your employees have completed. Instead, they are more focused on the accomplishments of your employees and also interaction to resolve the problems faced by your employees. All this ensures and encourages transparency and commitment among your employees.

Weekly Meetings

Next are the weekly meetings. The main aim of these meetings would be for discussing tactical problems that had come your way or your employees’ way. Moreover, it is also a time to review goals that have been set for your employees, how much has been achieved and what would be the next steps.

It is essential that you prepare for the weekly meetings beforehand so that you can determine any possible issues. However, always keep in mind that everything must be relevant to the progress of your team.

You can plan your weekly meetings like this:

Begin by sharing some good news or recognizing achievements for the first five minutes of the meeting.

Share the KPIs briefly and determine where you stand.

Continue by discussing patients’ possible issues being faced and other problems.

Finish up by discussing any further topics that must be addressed or news

that must be shared.

All of this can take about 15 to 30 minutes, depending on the agenda of the meeting.

Monthly Meetings

Monthly meetings can be around one to three hours long and it is best to have this meeting early in the morning since your employees would be most energetic during that time. In this meeting, you can resolve any strategic issues that relate to the overall running of your private practice.

It is best to stick to 3 to 4 issues in this meeting and ensure that you properly schedule the timing for each topic so that the employees can get back to their tasks. This will help in managing time and deadlines. Finish up the meeting by setting new goals for all the employees for the upcoming months. Make sure that those goals are measurable.

The major challenge of this meeting is not being able to schedule enough time for all the topics or adding too many things to the agenda. When you plan monthly meetings, ensure that you have enough time to discuss all the topics.

Remember, these meetings must be focused on reflecting and discussing the performance of your employees and the overall impact on your private practice. Ensure that you celebrate achievements and goals accomplished by the employees in the monthly or even weekly meetings. Ensure that all employees are part of the celebration since everyone is working towards a single end goal.

Group Activities

Team building is crucial in managing an efficient and successful organization. However, this is often overlooked by many. It is important for employees to understand one another and work together efficiently. This is why team building activities are important in enhancing unity and companionship among the employees. You can organize activities and events that are designed to involve and engage your employees in ways that encourage individuals to work together and cooperate.

Here are a few of the many advantages of team building:

Improved Morale

There is nothing that can prevent the monotony of daily tasks than team

building activities. It not only provides an opportunity for the employees to step out of the private practice, but it is a time where they can relax and unwind from the daily stress of working in health care. Once the event is done, there is bound to be improved morale and energy among your employees.

Better Relationships

This is what team building is all about - strengthening relationships and creating new ones. The team building activities are created with this focus and help in creating natural and strong relationships within your private practice. Improved relations result in enhanced abilities when employees have to collaborate. This further makes everyday tasks smoother and easier.

Enhanced Integration

With a better relationship, you would be able to encourage interaction between employees who don't communicate at work. While this might not be viewed as a work benefit, enhanced integration helps in leading towards innovating, problem-solving and thinking.

Increased Productivity

When the morale of the employees increase, their levels of productivity will also increase. This is not merely a short-term advantage. The team building will encourage your employees to work together more smoothly, which would result in better productivity for all employees.

Higher Efficiency

In addition to enhanced productivity, you will also notice the efficiency of the office increasing drastically. With better relationships, improved understanding of tasks and enhanced abilities attained through the activities of team building, you will notice a major decrease in wasted resources and time.

Positive Working Environment

Of course, no one wants to work in a boring and miserable office. This possibility can be eliminated with consistent team building events and activities which encourage friendly relationships and open communication. This doesn't mean you need to hold these events and activities every month; you can conduct team building events twice a year.

Defined and Developed Roles

It is possible that some of your employees are not sure of their exact role. These employees keep on struggling to determine what they are supposed to do and how are they contributing towards the prosperity of the private practice. With team building activities, these employees are given the chance to implement themselves in the best possible way they can. It helps them in determining their exact role and in understanding their importance within the team.

Stronger Teams

When each and every employee has defined and developed roles, they can make a stronger team. You can create teams based on their skill set and place together individuals with contrasting strengths to create better results. As a result, tight-knit and efficient teams are created.

Improved Communication

Communication is the main key that creates relationships that are open. This helps in making everything work smoothly. Team building activities are a great way to enhance communication within your private practice. It encourages your employees to communicate more effectively and clearly. This also helps in enhancing their levels of productivity (Figure 23.1).

Better Office Culture

Team building activities help in injecting some culture into your private practice, making it a nicer and fun place to work at. Having a creative and lively workplace makes it appealing for not just the existing employees but the potential employees and even the patients as well.

Figure 23.1. Tips to Retain Team Members. When Employees are Happy, they will keep the Patients Happy.

Enhancing Staff Satisfaction at Our Practice:

Medicine is a team sport-the collective is often much greater than the individual when it comes to patient care, innovative ideas, productivity, and efficiency. Effective teamwork leads to fewer medical errors and better patient care. Even more important is that effective teamwork leads to fewer medical errors. At our practice SuVi Eye Hospital & Lasik Laser Center in Kota we were fortunate to have the best team members since past 15 years. We followed aforementioned principles to retain our employees and keep them happy by celebrating everyone's birthday, listening and resolving their problems in timely manner keeping them happy and motivated. Happiness spreads and affects the energy of the entire team. When you create a pleasant culture in your practice, it maximizes the positive impact throughout your business. This boosts overall employee engagement and strengthens comradery among your staff.

Take-Home Message

➢ Communication plays a major role in the overall working of an organization.

➢ Communication is even more essential in health care settings as the patients' lives and health depends on it.

➢ Since communication is strong, the team is able to follow the instructions and be more productive.

➢ It would also make decision making and problem-solving faster and easier if you have open dialogs where employees can share their opinions and views.

➢ Lack of communication can lead to plenty of misunderstandings.

➢ With honest and open communication, you can ensure that everyone understands their responsibilities.

➢ When you have a strong communication policy, you and your staff would know how to interact with your patients.

➢ You can listen to your patients, answer their queries and help them understand the next steps.

➢ Lack of proper communication can lead to a major decrease in productivity levels.

➢ Effective communication results in productivity which further assists in

avoiding unnecessary delays in tasks.

➢ With consistent communication both externally and internally, your private practice stays transparent.

➢ When all your employees are comfortable enough to share their opinions and ideas, the innovation and cooperation level of your private practice will be high.

➢ Regular meetings are essential if you want effective communication practices to be followed within your private practice.

➢ Holding these daily meetings enhances commitment, engagement and transparency.

➢ All this ensures and encourages transparency and commitment among your employees.

➢ The main aim of weekly meetings would be for discussing tactical problems that had come your way or your employees' way.

➢ Monthly meetings can resolve any strategic issues that relate to the overall running of your private practice.

➢ These meetings must be focused on reflecting and discussing the performance of your employees and the overall impact on your private practice.

➢ Ensure that all employees are part of the celebration since everyone is working towards a single end goal.

➢ Team building is crucial in managing an efficient and successful organization.

➢ The team building activities are created with this focus and help in creating natural and strong relationships within your private practice.

➢ The team building activities will encourage your employees to work together more smoothly, which will result in better productivity for all employees.

➢ Team building activities are a great way to enhance communication within your private practice.

➢ Team building activities help in injecting some culture into your private practice, making it a nicer and fun place to work at.

Part IV

Creating the Perfect Balance, Maximizing Outcomes & Minimizing Errors

Chapter 24
How to Maximize Patient Satisfaction?

"Going above and beyond involves making customers "feel special" and helping them out even when it may not make sense."

- Neil Patel

Patient Satisfaction in Health Care

The strongest pillar of customer satisfaction is offering personalized attention to your customers. In the health care setting, this goes well beyond simply welcoming your patients with a smile or having small talk about their day. You can benefit from the latest trends in customer self-services and introduce patient-facing services that will enable your patients to take control of their health care experience.

A few examples of these patient-facing services can be found with numerous portals that enable patients to look up a physician's contact information, make appointments, pay their bills, go through educational materials, view their test results and their health records. In order to provide the highest convenience, it is essential for these portals to be accessible from mobile devices and home computers.

For this, you and your staff would have to keep all the records updated and instantly make all the changes so that the patients can be notified. This will also help in saving time and will decrease the number of calls your staff has to attend to from patients looking for their reports or other information. It will ultimately decrease the cost and enhance the productivity levels within your private practice.

Other than this, indeed, it is of utmost importance that you and your employees properly listen to what your patients have to say and understand their issues. You must also encourage them to offer you their valuable feedback. This way, patients will feel heard and will feel like you and your private practice truly care about them. It will also boost their confidence in their health care providers. You can also offer them a follow-up survey so that they can share their views and get further suggestions.

You need to keep in mind that patient satisfaction is one of the most important components for the success of your private practice and it plays a vital role in the continued improvement of your overall organization. There are numerous ways in which you can enhance the patients' experience. However, the most important thing is providing them with convenience as well as making them feel comfortable so that they can openly talk about their issues with you. This will help in establishing a trusting and strong relationship between the patients and your private practice (Figure 24.1).

Tips for Improving Patient Satisfaction
Listen CAREFULLY.
Be RESPONSIVE.
Understand the NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS of your patients.
Work on your BRAND image.
Encourage patient FEEDBACK.
Measure and IMPROVE.

Figure 24. 1: Tips for Improving Patient Satisfaction

Ways to Improve Patient Satisfaction

Enhancing the satisfaction of your patients and improving the experience is a constant process. You can't just implement a strategy just once and leave it there. You need to make sure that your past and existing patients are satisfied with your services, all the while attracting new patients and providing them with the best possible services.

Here are a few ways in which you can increase your patient satisfaction:

- Try delivering services as per your patients schedule, not merely the schedule that is convenient for you or your private practice. For instance, don't let your patients wait unnecessarily long to get their lab results. This is a disrespectful practice. Have it delivered to their homes or implement the patient-facing services through which they can view it on their smart phone.
- Ensure that all your employees are trained well to handle the patients and their family members in distressing situations. It is the job of the health care providers to ease the stress and worries of their patients. Even in grave situations, you and your employees must know how to handle patients and their loved ones.
- Strive for a blame-free environment. Mistakes are unavoidable, even highly skilled professionals can sometimes make mistakes. Create an environment in which instead of playing the blame game, the employees focus more on handling the mistake and finding solutions to make things better. Moreover, fix your system in a way that mistakes can be avoided and all services and treatments go on smoothly.
- Form a personalized connection with all the patients. Make them feel important. You can do this by always using their name, wear a name tag so that patients know who you are, always make eye contact with them when you are interacting. This shows them that you are actually listening to them and understand what they are saying.
- Focus on educating your patients. Instead of simply treating them, help them understand how else they can improve their health. This should be a common practice throughout your private practice. Your main aim is to ensure the better health of your patients. That is why give them tips and advice on how they can prevent their existing problem in the future. You can even advice them about some other health concern they are experiencing, even if it is not what they are consulting you for.
- There must be no tolerance policy for bullying, abuse and harassment. All employees must understand the importance of unity and respect. They must not only be respectful towards the patients but also towards one another. It is essential to provide a safe and healthy working environment for all your employees. Any incident of harassment, discrimination or

bullying based on gender, race, color or religion must be strictly dealt with immediately.

- Encourage your employees to be mindful of their verbal and nonverbal language. They must understand that eye contact is vital to make patients comfortable enough to open up about their problems. Moreover, it shows that you are actually paying attention to what they are saying.
- Another important thing to ensure higher patient satisfaction is to continuously monitor and evaluate your employees. This ensures that everyone is properly doing their work and is doing it the right way. Monitoring and evaluating will help you determine what is lacking and what training your employees need to enhance the patient experience.
- Requesting feedback from patients is one of the most effective ways of making sure that they are satisfied with your services. You can ask them to rate the experience they had after each consultation and treatment so you know what is lacking and what needs to be improved. Moreover, asking your patients' for feedback would assure them that you truly care about them and want to offer them the best health care services.

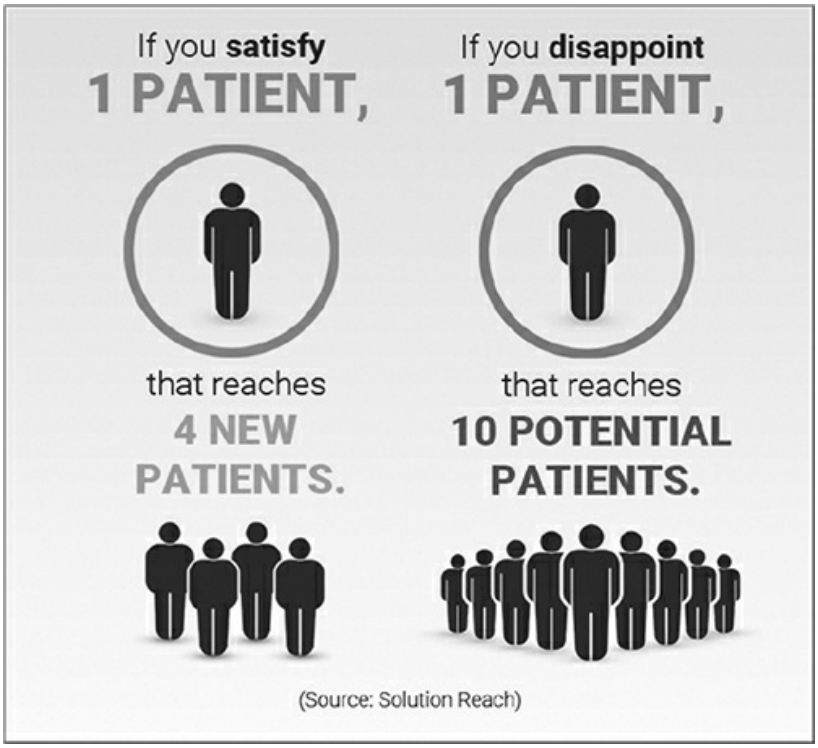


Figure 24. 2: Patient Satisfaction versus Patient Disappointment

Enhancing Patient Satisfaction in Our Practice

Patient satisfaction remains one of the most important aspects for any medical professional and every doctor does his/her best effort to achieve a happy and satisfied patient (Figure 24.2). Here I share some pearls of wisdom that we have learned during the past 15 years of our practice. In an OPD, when a patient comes for a follow-up at SuVi Eye Hospital & Lasik Laser Center at Kota, we put some personal details related to the patient on the patient record. We also include names of their kin as "Shravan Kumar" (an obedient son who served his blind parents), who brings them for consultation. Most of the parents are really happy to hear the appreciation of their son or daughter by the treating doctor. Their son or daughter also feels satisfied that the doctor knows them and is talking about them in addition to treating the eye problem.

In the ophthalmology specialty, cataract and refractive surgeries are the two most common operations done using topical anesthesia, i.e., putting eye drops to numb the eyes. In topical anesthesia, most patients (who are undergoing eye surgery for the first time) are worried and anxious about the operation. They are more scared when someone tells them about the painful experience of cataract surgery or the fear of pain while injecting a numbing solution near the eye to alleviate the pain.

When I was invited to perform a Live Surgery during an international ophthalmology conference in Milan (Italy) in October 2005, I realized the importance of conversing with the patient during the surgery to allay his/her anxiety. After that, I made a habit and I always talk to my patients while operating on them. I call their names and greet them and try to speak to them in their own language and try to put them at ease. I will start the surgery by talking about something not related to the eye such as about their hobbies, their children and grandchildren and their favourite food or their accomplishments. Most patients are very happy and feel proud to narrate accomplishments of their children or grandchildren. Sometimes, I narrate the story of Krishna Sudama or Mahabharat (a famous mythological epic), etc. in the operation theater and label the eye surgery done using "Sudama Padhati." A majority of the patients remember this special conversation in the operation theater even years after surgery. The cataract-intraocular lens surgery is done in about 10 minutes time and most of the patients are pleasantly surprised that the operation is over. By using this method most of the patients are at ease and also share their experience happily with other patients who are waiting outside (for their turn) and are anxious about the

surgery. This unique experience in the operation theater helps the patient relieve their anxiety, exceed their expectation and also enhance doctor-patient trust as well as satisfaction.

Our staff member explains the details of surgery in the "live surgery ward" when the eye surgery is being done by Dr. Vidushi or myself in the operation theater. A step-by-step explanation of the entire eye surgery, recording the surgery on their smartphone and sharing on the social media (with their permission), put the patient's experience far ahead and they also share their entire experience (review) of hospitals on the "Google page" by giving the best ranking for the hospital about their experience of the eye surgery. Tips to keep patients happy are summarized in (Figure 24.3).

HOW TO KEEP PATIENTS HAPPY
ACTION
REASON
Listen
Listen to positive and negative feedback. Do not be defensive. Accept criticism as it will highlight improvement areas.
Build Trust
Keep promises. Deliver what and when you say you will.
Take Problems Seriously
Have a patient friendly system for handling complaints so that when things go wrong, your employees are trained to put things right.
Get It Right First Time
Saves you time and money if patients are handled well from the beginning.
Value Your Staff
Invest in staff training. Empower your staff to deal with patient complaints. Happy employees will lead to happy patients.
Go the Extra Mile
A readiness to delight patients is what separates the best from the rest.
Put Yourself In Patient's Shoes
Would you be delighted by the service you receive?

Figure 24. 3: How to keep Patients Happy?

Take-Home Message

➢ The strongest pillar of customer satisfaction is offering personalized attention to your customers.

➢ Introduce patient-facing services that will enable your patients to take control of their health care experience.

➢ Indeed, it is of utmost importance that you and your employees properly listen to what your patients have to say and understand their issues.

➢ The most important thing is providing them with convenience as well as making them feel comfortable so that they can openly talk about their issues with you.

➢ Enhancing the satisfaction of your patients and improving their experience is a constant process.

➢ Even in grave situations, you and your employees must know how to handle patients and their loved ones.

➢ Create an environment in which instead of playing the blame game, the employees focus more on handling the mistake and finding solutions to make things better.

➢ Instead of simply treating your patients, help them understand how else can they improve their health.

➢ Asking your patients for feedback would assure them that you truly care about them and want to offer them the best health care services.

➢ Any incident of harassment, discrimination or bullying based on gender, race, color or religion must be strictly dealt with immediately.

➢ Monitoring and evaluating your staff will help you determine what is lacking and what training your employees need in order to enhance the patient experience.

Chapter 25
Adding the Human Factor to Strengthen Doctor-Patient Trust

"They may forget your name, but they will never forget how you made them feel."

- Maya Angelou

Importance of Showing Compassion and Kindness

Practicing compassion and kindness is of utmost importance, especially when it comes to health care. As mentioned before, patients are nervous and anxious when they visit a health care facility, even if it is for a routine consultation. It is not easy for anyone to visit a health care institution without worrying and feeling edgy. It does them no good if their health care providers are not empathetic and disregard what they have to say and simply hand out prescriptions.

Many health care providers pride themselves on their experience and expertise, so much that they barely listen to what their patient has to say and make the diagnoses within the first few minutes. While you must have years of experience and even be considered the best in your field, it is still unacceptable to make your patients feel unheard and disrespected.

As a health care professional and now the owner of a private practice, it is your responsibility to be kind and compassionate towards your patients. You need to set an example for all your employees to follow. This is how you add the human factor, enhance patient satisfaction and improve patient and doctor relationship. This is especially true for those patients who have a surgery coming up, are worried about their health, have a major disease or disorder or have any other health challenges. Nevertheless, even if it is a routine checkup, your patients deserve to be treated with compassion and kindness so that they feel valued and comfortable.

Empathy, Kindness, Compassion to Strengthen Doctor-Patient Trust

Empathy is defined as, “the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.” It is the capacity to put one’s self in another’s shoes and feel what that person is going through and share their emotions and feelings. It is the recognition and validation of a patient’s fear, anxiety, pain, and worry. It is the ability to understand patients’ feelings and facilitate a more accurate diagnoses and more caring treatment. Expressing patient empathy indeed advances humanism in healthcare – as a matter of fact — expressing empathy in healthcare is the key ingredient to enhancing the patient experience and patient encounter.

Both empathy and compassion in healthcare play vital roles in the patient experience and are key components of the physician-patient relationship. When a patient arrives to see their healthcare provider, the patient’s medical condition — whether it is a severe illness or injury, a chronic condition, or simply a routine check-up – will often manifest emotions such as anxiety, fear, and apprehension. Patients want to know they are receiving the very best care, and that is conveyed when their care team is empathetic and compassionate.

Why is Empathy Important?

Empathy extends far beyond a patient’s medical history, signs, and symptoms. It is more than a clinical diagnosis and treatment. Empathy encompasses a connection and an understanding that includes the mind, body, and soul. Expressing empathy is highly effective and powerful, which builds patient trust, calms anxiety, and improves health outcomes. Research has shown empathy and compassion to be associated with better adherence to medications, decreased malpractice cases, fewer mistakes, and increased patient satisfaction. Expressing empathy, one patient at a time, advances humanism in healthcare.

I would like to share an example how empathy, kindness and compassion, if used tactfully, can produce a miracle. An elderly mother used to visit SuVi Eye Institute & Lasik Laser Centre, Kota with her middle-aged son, who was an alcoholic and had lost his job and wife because of his addiction. The mother was obviously concerned about her son. Once I took the son aside and gave him a pep talk and spent half an hour trying to convince him to give up his addiction, at least for the sake of this mother. This was an emotional appeal from a doctor who had operated on his mother. They came to me again a few months later and the mother was beaming, as the son had finally

given up on alcohol and they wanted to thank me. The son later confided that when I talked to him about his problems in a kind and compassionate manner, he somehow felt ashamed that a doctor they visit probably once a year could feel his mother's pain and not him. This pricked his conscience. Now he hasn't touched alcohol for almost three years!

I, Dr Suresh K. Pandey, would also like to share a personal example when a few words of kindness and encouragement helped me during one of the most difficult phases of my professional life. In December 1997, I had completed my junior residency at PGIMER, Chandigarh, and was keen to pursue a senior residency in ophthalmology at the same institute. I had appeared for an interview, but unfortunately, I did not get the position. A candidate from another medical college, who I had heard had some political connections, was selected for this coveted seat. For several days, I was very sad. My colleagues and faculty members were also surprised, as I was a hard-working, sincere resident with six peer-reviewed publications in medical journals, and was considered the best candidate for this position. During this time, my mentor, Prof. Jagat Ram, who is now the director of PGIMER, called me to his home and encouraged me to keep working with full energy and enthusiasm. He told me that whatever happens is for the best. He also said that if God closes one window, He opens the door for several opportunities. Prof. Ram suggested I appear in an interview for a senior residency post at Government Medical College, Chandigarh. He reassured me that since he going to the Storm Eye Institute in the USA to pursue a WHO fellowship, he would try his best to get me an international fellowship there as well. His kind words not only uplifted my spirit, but also helped me to come out of my low phase; he instilled new energy and confidence in me. I was selected for an international fellowship at the Storm Eye Institute in June 1998 and was very fortunate to work with Prof. David J. Apple, Prof. M. Edward Wilson and some world-renowned eye surgeons during the five-year period that followed.

Aside from these two examples, many studies have found that kindness has healing powers. Just a few kind words can completely change the perspective of an individual, turn their day around or even alter their outlook on life. Empathizing with your patients, listening to them, being kind to them, being compassionate to their problems and feelings can have a drastic positive impact on their overall treatment process. Showing compassion and kindness to your patients can:

- Decrease the pain
- Lower anxiety levels
- Quick recovery
- Decrease levels of blood pressure
- Reduce hospital stays

Research has also indicated that when health care providers show compassion, their patients are more likely to be more open in communicating their problems which leads to improved diagnoses. They are also more likely to follow their instructions better which results in reduced re-admissions. This further creates a kinder and compassionate environment for the employees as well. They are able to experience lower levels of exhaustion and elevated levels of work satisfaction when their patients are happy and comfortable with them. Better results and rapid improvements in their patients also increase their motivation levels and encourage them to make more efforts to help their patients.

This shows that compassion and kindness are an indispensable part of a health care setting and you must ensure that you and your employees are compassionate and warm towards the patients. This will not only improve the overall quality of care but will also enhance employee satisfaction levels and help them deal with unpredictable and long hours at their high-pressure work more efficiently.

Taking Care of Your Patients' Emotions and Feelings

It is normal for patients and their loved ones to get emotional when they have to deal with bad news or when faced with the medical care realities. It often gets complicated to deal with your patients' feelings and emotions when they are under severe distress and trauma. Many health care providers have to deal with crying, screaming, anguish and sometimes even physical violence from their patients or their distressed loved ones as they are unable to deal with the possibilities of losing a loved one or watching their loved one in pain. Even if the situation doesn't go this far, it is also rather difficult to handle a patient or their loved one silently crying.

It is important that you are prepared to deal with these feelings and emotions showcased by your patients the right way. Throughout medical school and training, a majority of the health care providers get so consumerist in learning all the medical knowledge, techniques and strategies that they

completely neglect learning or determining ways to deal with emotional patients. This is the reason why many health care providers try avoiding such patients or employ the wrong tactics to try to deal with such patients, only to end up worsening the situation.

There are many ways in which you and your employees can handle such patients and help them get the right treatment they need in order to enhance their health. Here are a few tips and strategies you and your employees can utilize when facing an emotional patient or their loved ones:

- When faced with an emotional outburst from a patient, the best strategy is staying calm. Even if the patient or their loved ones are angry at you or are questioning your credibility, you must stay calm. It is important to understand that they are going through a tough time processing everything. There is no need to take things personally. Indeed it is rather easy to lose your cool when someone is shouting at you and even abusing you verbally, but you need to keep in mind that negatively reacting to such an outburst can escalate the situation and make it worse.
- In a situation when you feel that you can't control your anger or emotions, the best thing to do is to remove yourself from the situation. It is integral that you maintain professionalism and avoid breaking any rules. Ask someone to take over while you take a break or get some fresh air to cool off. Find ways to calm yourself and once you have better control over your emotions, head back and deal with the patient.
- Listen intently to what the patient has to say. Sometimes their shouts, screams and rants can reveal what they fear. It might give you pointers about what they fear and what they are worried about. It is possible that they don't completely comprehend the situation or think it is worse than it actually is. You can then gently explain the entire situation once they have calmed down, be compassionate and sympathize with their fears. Help them understand better, get them professional help if it is beyond your scope, discuss all the possibilities and options and other issues you feel they are experiencing.
- Never tell the patient who is angry, frustrated, screaming or crying to calm down or get a grip on themselves. This will definitely make the situation worse and even out of control. Let them vent out. They are eventually going to stop.

- Once they start calming down, ask them questions to determine what is bothering them. For instance, if they have yelled about how your private practice is lousy, ask them if they are not happy with your services or with your treatment. When they have vented out, they will ponder on the question and might realize that they really don't have a problem with you or your private practice. However, they might point out a few things; even if they are not true, acknowledge them and apologize, instead of trying to reason with them. Tell them you and your team will help make their stay comfortable and show them you are willing to assist them in every possible way. This can further calm them down and might even make your relationship stronger with them.
- Get help and support. Whether you or one of your staff members is unable to tackle a situation like this, it is essential to get help immediately instead of keeping on trying. It is important that the patient is dealt with the right way, even if you have to seek help. This certainly doesn't mean that you are not capable enough, every patient is different and you wouldn't be able to tackle all outbursts on your own. Having a backup is crucial to handle the patients' emotions and feelings. Keep in mind, this certainly is no failure on your part. No matter how experienced you are, there might be patients that you wouldn't be able to handle at times. It is perfectly okay to ask for help and not be ashamed about it (Figure 25.1).

Figure 25. 1: E.M.P.A.T.H.Y. for Better Communication with Patients

Mistrust for Doctors Advice, Investigations, Procedures Among

Patients:

Doctor patient trust is deteriorating at present. It is not uncommon to encounter cases that will mistrust doctors and their advice. *I remember an incident where during the initial years of our practice at SuVi Eye Hospital & Lasik Laser Center, Kota, a middle-aged zoology professor with cataracts visited us. He underwent bilateral cataract-intraocular lens surgery with excellent postoperative results. A few years later, he visited us again, complaining of seeing floaters in front of his right eye. At that time, a visiting retina specialist, Dr. Gunjan Prakash, used to come to our centre to manage patients with retinal problems. Dr. Prakash examined him and informed him that he had a horseshoe tear (HST) in the retina of one eye, which needed urgent laser treatment to seal it and reduce the risk of developing a retinal detachment. A horseshoe tear is a special type of break in the retina, which can cause retinal detachment with loss of vision. Once a retinal detachment develops, the management is surgical and the results may not be very good. Both Dr. Prakash and I explained to the patient his eye condition, the need for laser and the risks involved in detail. However, after asking numerous questions, he told us that he believed that visiting doctors wanted to make money in their brief one-day visits and, therefore, he was not convinced that he needed the treatment. This was quite an insult, especially because we take pride not only in our work and qualifications but also the fact that we have a completely ethical practice, and have always advised every patient only what is in their best interests. However, rather than getting annoyed and confronting him, we just smiled and told him that we had explained everything to him in detail, and suggested that he should get a second opinion. We also told him emphatically that he should not ignore it. The professor left and revisited us a few weeks later. He hadn't taken a second opinion, but was now even more convinced that he didn't need the laser, as nothing untoward had happened in the intervening weeks.*

We wondered why he was back at the clinic when he didn't trust us, but we examined him once again professionally. We told him that the tear was still there and was still a risk to his vision, and that our advice remained unchanged. He ignored us once again and walked away.

A few months later, he came again with a sudden drop in vision, and we immediately knew that he had developed the retinal detachment. We resisted the 'we told you so' talk and told him that he had developed a retinal

detachment as we had feared and now he needed urgent retinal surgery. He successfully underwent the vitreo-retinal surgery at our hospital by Dr. Abhishek R. Kothari and had a reasonable visual recovery, as expected in such cases. From this incident, we learned that we may give our honest and best opinion to our patients, and they still may not trust us. That's all right. Never confront the patients or start an argument. However, make sure that you document your diagnosis and your advice in detail, and that the patient was not willing to opt for the treatment advised.

How to Build Patient Trust?

1. **Discuss mistrust openly.** If patients are willing, always offer them a chance to discuss why they might be suspicious of healthcare providers/the system, and if they have fears related to their condition. Understanding their perspective allows me the opportunity to respond to specific concerns, and reassure them of my intentions to help.
2. **Communicate with—not at—patients.** Clear communication means avoiding medical jargon, but not omitting medical information. Patients may become mistrustful if they do not understand overly medical language, but also if they feel information is being withheld from them. It is essential to strive for simplified, but thorough communication, and check back regularly for feedback from the patient.
3. **Build a partnership with patients.** Many mistrustful patients respond well to being given options and a degree of control over their healthcare decisions. This is predicated by asking open-ended questions, listening carefully, and understanding what is most important to each patient.

Take-Home Message

➢ Practicing compassion and kindness is of utmost importance, especially when it comes to health care.

➢ While you must have years of experience and even be considered the best in your field, it is still unacceptable to make your patients feel unheard and disrespected.

➢ Just a few kind words can completely change the perspective of an individual, turn their day around or even alter their outlook on life.

➢ Research has indicated that when health care providers show compassion, their patients are likely to be more open in communicating their

problems which leads to improved diagnoses.

➢ Practicing compassion and kindness will not only improve the overall quality of care but will also enhance employee satisfaction levels and help them deal with unpredictable and long hours at their high-pressure work more efficiently.

➢ It often gets complicated to deal with your patients' feelings and emotions when they are under severe distress and trauma.

➢ It is important that you are prepared to deal with these feelings and emotions showcased by your patients the right way.

➢ When faced with an emotional outburst from a patient, the best strategy is staying calm.

➢ In a situation when you feel that you can't control your anger or emotions and might negatively react to your patients' outburst, the best thing to do is to remove yourself from the situation.

➢ Sometimes their shouts, screams and rants can reveal what your patients fear; so listen carefully.

➢ Never tell the patient who is angry, frustrated, screaming or crying to calm down or get a grip on themselves.

➢ It is perfectly okay to ask for help and not be ashamed about it.

Chapter 26
How to Avoid Malpractice Lawsuits against Your Medical Practice?

"Risk comes from not knowing what you're doing."

- Warren Buffett

Malpractice lawsuits against doctors and other health care providers are no longer solely based on an error in medical treatments. They've become more about how a patient feels they were treated—or mistreated—by the caregiver or the health care facility. While this may seem irrational, it's a reality and it's also why health care professionals need to consider the following steps for avoiding a malpractice lawsuit when performing their jobs (Figure 26.1).

Understanding Medical Errors and Malpractice

Medical malpractice and medical errors can result in your patients experiencing disfigurement, more time away from loved ones and work, emotional trauma, suffering and pain, additional financial costs, illness, frustration, injury and even death. Moreover, you can also end up being served by the patient and/or their loved ones for the damage caused by you or your private practice. Given the negative emotional, physical and financial consequences of malpractice and medical errors, the best thing you can do to protect your practice, yourself and your employees is to take the right measures to avoid malpractice and medical errors in the first place.

According to a USA study published on malpractice risk:

- By 45 years of age, 36% of doctors in low-risk specialties and 88% of doctors in high-risk specialties are likely to have had at least one malpractice claim.

- By 65 years of age, 75% of doctors in low-risk specialties and 99% of doctors in high-risk specialties are likely to have had at least one malpractice claim.

- Across specialties, the average indemnity payment for malpractice claims

was US $274,887.

According to the judgment given in 2015, The Supreme Court of India has awarded the highest ever compensation in a medical negligence case in India and directed the Advanced Medical Research Institute (AMRI) Hospital in Kolkata to pay Rs 11 crore to NRI Doctor Kunal Saha whose wife died in 1998 after treatment at the hospital.

Let’s first understand what counts as medical errors and malpractice in order to determine ways to prevent them. When the health of your patient becomes worse, it gets difficult to determine if the reason is their current disease or condition or is it due to some medical error in the process of treatment. What further complicates the matter is that in some cases even if a medical error has taken place, it doesn’t mean that it can be considered malpractice. The ‘standard of care’ helps in determining whether an error or a number of errors can be accounted for as malpractice.

This ‘standard of care’ is the level of care an individual can expect reasonably from a typical health care provider. All the health care providers are only required to perform as per what is expected from a typical health care provider of that specific field. However, it is essential to keep in mind that the health care providers who are considered experts in a certain field can be held on a higher standard as compared to a typical health care provider.

There are certain cases in which the occurrence of medical error is not the fault of the health care provider. It can be due to the patient giving an inaccurate medical history which led to the wrong diagnosis. This indicates that not all medical errors can be blamed on the mistake of a doctor.

On the other hand, medical malpractice happens when the health care provider doesn’t follow the standard of care that is accepted by the medical community. It is a type of medical negligence that indicates that the health care provider was responsible and legally obliged to provide care to the patient but failed to perform that responsibility or breached that duty which resulted in some injury or damage to the patient. In countries around the world, there are medical malpractice laws that resolve such issues.

Commonly made Medical Errors

It is essential to keep in mind that all medical errors lead to malpractice and not all mistakes can result in injuries or damages to the patient. However, there are numerous injuries and damages that can result from medical

malpractice or medical errors and can lead to an investigation (Figure 26.1).

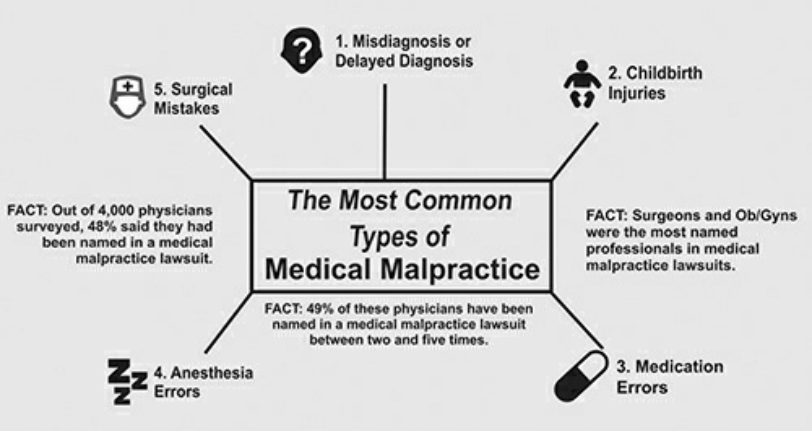

1. Misdiagnosis or Delayed Diagnosis
2. Childbirth Injuries
5. Surgical Mistakes
The Most Common Types of Medical Malpractice
FACT: Out of 4,000 physicians surveyed, 48% said they had been named in a medical malpractice lawsuit.
FACT: Surgeons and Ob/Gyns were the most named professionals in medical malpractice lawsuits.
FACT: 49% of these physicians have been named in a medical malpractice lawsuit between two and five times.
4. Anesthesia Errors
3. Medication Errors

Figure 26. 1: The Most Common types of Medical Malpractice

Following are some of the most common medical errors which you and your employees must avoid:

Wrong Medication

When wrong medicine is received by a patient, this medical error might have happened during numerous stages in the process of treatment. For instance, the doctor's handwriting might have been illegible, the pharmacist might have handed the patient the wrong medication, the nurse might have accidentally given the wrong medicine or some other issue might have occurred. No matter what the reason or how it happened, the outcome of giving the patient the wrong medication can be severe. For instance, in cases of heart problems, the right medication is required to protect the life of the patient, but if an incorrect medication is given, it might result in grave consequences. Wrong medication can also result in allergic reactions that can be anywhere from mild to severe and might even prove lethal in some cases.

Incorrect Dosage

This means the patient received the wrong dosage of the required medication. The medication might be right but the dosage given to the patient isn't. The outcome of a patient getting the wrong dosage can be as severe as getting the wrong medication and in some cases even more serious than that. If the dose is smaller than prescribed it means the patient might not get the benefit that was intended from the medicine and might continue to be in pain. If the patient gets a larger dose of the prescribed medicine, that might result in the failure of an organ or even death. It is essential that that medicine is given in the right dose as recommended by the doctor.

Wrong Site Surgery

This indicates that the surgery had been performed on the wrong body part, or worse, the wrong patient. This is possibly one of the worst medical errors a health care professional can commit. Surprisingly, this type of medical error happens about 1,300 to 2,700 times each year in America, according to a study. The best way to avoid this is for health care providers to not be hasty, slow a bit down and double-check the basic information including the name of the patient, their diagnosis and treatment plan as well as confirmation of the surgery. Moreover, before the surgery, it is also essential to ensure all necessary instruments and equipment are available. The health care providers should also recheck the important reports to ensure that the site of the surgery is the right one before they begin. There are many health care providers who have now initiated the practice of asking the patient to mark the proper site of their body for operation.

Misdiagnosis

This happens when the health care professional makes a mistake in diagnosing the illness of the patient. According to research of autopsy reports, doctors seriously misdiagnose the illness and disorders of the patients in around 20% of the cases. While a wrong diagnosis might necessarily not result in death, it can still result in serious complications. It can result in the wrong medication prescription, suffering and pain, more injuries, escalating of the condition, emotional trauma and if not identified in time, can also become fatal.

Steps you can take to Prevent Malpractice

There are numerous medical errors and malpractice cases that have resulted in health care providers losing their licenses or health care institutions paying millions in lawsuits. Moreover, these medical practices and malpractice have also resulted in patients attaining permanent injuries or damages and have also caused deaths.

It is essential to take proper measures to prevent these medical errors and malpractice to safeguard your patients, your license, your employees and your practice. Here are a few steps you can take:

Understand the Consequences

First of all, it is not just important for you but all your employees to understand why they need to be careful and to prevent medical errors. They

need to understand the grave consequences which even the smallest of medical errors can lead to. This will help them in being careful and following the right protocol even when they are in a rush.

Proper Documentation

This is the one thing that can protect you in lawsuits. At times, even if the health care providers have done all the right treatments and haven't even made any medical errors, the patient or their family members can sue the health care institution if they are not happy with the treatment. Without proper documentation of each and every step, there would be no way to prove that whatever decisions were made during the treatment were necessary and the best for the patient. It is essential that you ensure that all employees document even the smallest adjustment or changes in medication in the file of the patient and update it accordingly.

Effective Communication

Proper communication among employees is essential in ensuring none of the team members makes any mistake throughout the treatment process. It is important to ensure all the details, changes, additions and the current state of the patient is updated and all the team members of the health care team are informed about it and no mistakes can be made. Moreover, communication with the patient is also essential, as it might help in improving the treatment plan.

Informed Consent

This is one of the most important things that every health care provider must understand and follow. Whatever medical decisions are needed to be made must be communicated clearly to the patient and/or the family members, the next steps in the treatment plan must also be properly explained to them and most importantly, their consent must be taken in writing/video recording to avoid any future lawsuits.

Be Consistent and Clear

All the instructions between the physician, the staff, the nurses and the other members of the health care team must be clearly given in order to prevent any medical errors. Aside from this, you must make sure that the patient and/or their family members understand the entire process. You need to make efforts in making the words and terms simple so that they can better understand the entire situation and treatment plan. The more they understand, the lower are

the chances that they might file a case against you or your practice even when no mistakes had been made. These cases typically happen when the patients or their loved ones refuse to come to terms with the consequences of a disease or a disorder that can't be avoided with any treatment or medication. These cases also happen as a result of trauma or as a means to cope with the loss of their loved ones, they want someone to be blamed and blaming the doctors and hospital is what they end up doing.

Malpractice Suits in India

According to a report in The Economic Times (December 6, 2019 issue), there are 52 lakh medical errors taking place in India . The safety of patients and the affordability of health care services are associated with these errors. With such a high rate of errors, the system must be inducted with efficient doctors, professional protocols and a high standard of treatment guidelines (Figure 26.2).

The ABC of Minimizing Medical Errors and Litigation

The ABC to minimize medical error during medical practice includes:

A: Accurate and complete documentation.

B: Be clear and consistent; communicate effectively to explain the pros and cons of treatment and establish a good patient relationship.

C: Consent and checklists to avoid errors.

What Are the Most Effective Ways to Discourage Lawsuits?
Make the plaintiff responsible for attorney and legal fees of every party involved, if they lose 51%
Have a medical panel screen cases for merit 50%
Place caps on noneconomic damages 44%
Better communication and rapport with patients 43%
Try cases before health courts 27%
Reduce medical errors made by doctors 27%
Ban lawyers from taking malpractice cases on contingency 27%

Figure 26.2: Effective ways of Minimizing Medical Lawsuits

The number of cases filed against medical professionals for malpractice is

increasing in India because patients now have more awareness. While some cases are legitimate, most doctors are wrongfully accused because of a lack of public understanding. Health care professionals must provide service and also maintain proper records about the patient's history, consent and treatment. This practice will bring down incidents of malpractice and protect the doctors from allegations and fake lawsuits. Following surgical checklists, protocols, proper documentation (maintaining medical records), taking informed consent, communication about the outcome of the minimizing medical errors and litigations procedure or treatment, timely referral of the patient (in case of any complication) and obtaining adequate professional liability insurance are some ways to minimize the risk of litigation.

Health care is a service that should not negatively impact the trust of the general public. It should be delivered with the utmost care, sincerity and diligence. It has become our responsibility to ensure that the errors that are within our control are reduced and eventually eradicated.

Take-Home Message

➢ Medical malpractice and medical errors can result in your patients experiencing disfigurement, more time away from loved ones and work, emotional trauma, suffering and pain, additional financial costs, illness, frustration, injury and even death.

➢ The 'standard of care' helps in determining whether an error or a number of errors can be accounted for as malpractice.

➢ There are certain cases in which the occurrence of a medical error is not the fault of the health care provider.

➢ Medical malpractice happens when the health care provider doesn't follow the standard of care that is accepted by the medical community.

➢ In countries around the world, there are medical malpractice laws that resolve such issues.

➢ The outcome of giving the patient the wrong medication can be severe.

➢ The outcome of a patient getting the wrong dosage can also lead to grave consequences.

➢ While a wrong diagnosis might necessarily not result in death, it can still result in serious complications.

➢ It is essential to take proper measures to prevent these medical errors and

malpractice to safeguard your patients, your license, your employees and your practice.

➢ Proper documentation is very important; even the smallest adjustment or change in medication has to be updated in the patient's file accordingly.

➢ Proper communication among employees is essential in ensuring none of the team members makes any mistake throughout the treatment process.

➢ Informed consent must be taken in writing to avoid any future lawsuits.

➢ All the instructions between the physician, the staff, the nurses and the other members of the health care team must be clearly given in order to prevent any medical errors.

Chapter 27
Solo Versus Group Medical Practice

"The art is long, life is short, opportunity fleeting, experiment dangerous, judgment difficult."

- Hippocrates

The current practice of medicine faces many opportunities and challenges going forward. The COVID-19 pandemic is the biggest challenge the world has faced since the Second World War. The new historical divide will be termed as B.C. (Before COVID-19) and A.C. (After COVID-19). There are uncertainties and lots of questions about the future of almost every domain including medical practice pattern and managing finances. Routine OPD and routine surgery in India and worldwide were shut for few weeks. There were a lot of uncertainties about the future and most of the doctors have started their OPD and OT taking all necessary precautions to prevent transmission of COVID-19. With decreasing OPD and surgical volumes, increasing cost of COVID-19 protective measures (masks, sanitizers, PPE, etc) and a declining global economy, it may become increasingly difficult to stay afloat and flourish.

There are many forms of Medical Practice today, including Solo Practice, Group Practice, Corporate Practice, Institutional Practice and newer forms of Practice Consolidations and Mergers. There are also newer challenges (regulations as clinical establishment acts, NABH accreditation, generic drugs, possible price cap on implants/biodevices, etc.), which have an impact on the way we practice medicine, and it is in our best interests to stay ahead of the challenges posed by these policy changes.

Group Medical Practice: A Suitable During COVID-19?

In recent years, Group Practice has become a concept, that is often talked about, and everyone seems to wax eloquent on how good and useful Group Practice can be for all involved. And yet, there are very few examples of a really successful group practice, where the stakeholders are all happy and the association can last for a long time. So, what is it about Group Practice that

makes it an idea, “easier discussed than implemented”? Why is it that the list of perceived advantages of Group Practice is so long, and yet there are few models in practice, from which beginners can take inspiration and follow their example? Or is it that doctors are simply not suited for the concept? And after all, why make the change from Solo to Group practice, when solo practices have survived and done well for years?

The reason why we need to discuss all this is because our society, medical science, the nature of practices and everything else around us is changing so fast, that we need to respond equally fast to these changes and evolve new methods of keeping up. While it was alright till even 2-3 decades ago to take things easy, and a reasonable level of competence was enough for a doctor to survive and do well in society, with adequate financial remuneration and lot of respect; today the scenario has changed dramatically. It is still a matter of individual choice and personality to take things easy or not, but we now live in a very demanding society, with constant pressure to do more, be more and give more and there is ever increasing competition. Our role models and mentors , who strived hard and achieved tremendous financial success and acclaim; and to achieve even a fraction of that today, needs a lot more hard work and varied skills to establish and run a successful ophthalmic practice. For doctors, the real need of the hour is to somehow become more efficient and achieve more (more technology, more expertise, more volumes, more attractive workplace) with less (less time, less staff and less money) and the need of the hour for the society is to contain the spirally rising costs of medical treatment. It would also be in the interest of doctors in general to try and evolve new models to contain medical costs, before we are forced to do so by society and government.

Group Medical Practice Vs Solo Medical Practice:

So, where does the concept of Group Practice stand amidst all this? The advocates of Group Practice consider this as one of the best methods to contain costs and increase efficiency of doctors, allowing them more personal time. Most certainly, it is obvious that if a group of doctors can share the same equipment and staff and expert managerial assistance, the costs would come down dramatically and this arrangement would also allow doctors more flexibility in their daily work schedules. This would also make the group of doctors more strong in society and give them better negotiating power when dealing with diverse elements like insurance companies, organizations for

empanelment, civic agencies, medical equipment manufacturing companies etc. This would also protect them from unwanted elements like blackmailers, corrupt officials etc. who unfortunately make doctors a soft target. This could theoretically become a win-win situation for all – the doctors in the group as well as their patients.

On the other hand, there are definite advantages to Solo practice. Though it may seem less glamorous and more outdated to see a single doctor managing everything in a small, unassuming set-up, but it really suits those who like to make their own decisions and chart their own course. You can decide your own timings; your own direction for future growth, work at your own pace and the money you make is all yours. Your only arguments are with your spouse and there is no need to have endless discussions about revenue sharing etc. And then, there are many examples of individual ophthalmologists, who have single-handedly earned more name as well as money than even large institutions.

The key therefore is to choose the right option for yourself. It is unwarranted to have a debate over whether Group Practice is better than Solo Practice or vice versa, but to choose what suits you best. Whether for solo or for group, it is imperative to have clear objectives and goals beforehand and chart your course accordingly. At the same time it is equally important to be honest to yourself as well as your colleagues. For example, it is perfectly legitimate for a beginner to join a group practice for few years, before starting a solo practice, to gain experience and earn some start-up money. But it would be best to be clear about this course and let the colleagues in the group know about your future plans. At the same time, the group should also honestly make it clear to the new entrant about the kind of responsibilities and job profile.

Pros and Cons of Group Medical Practice:

So, let us also have a closer look at some of the perceived advantages and disadvantages of Group Practice. For example, one of the most often cited advantage of Group Practice is sharing the cost of medical equipment, bringing down the start-up cost. Ophthalmology, for example, a beginner Solo Ophthalmologist, basically starts with a basic cataract surgery set-up and expands along the way as the earnings increase. So, he/she would need about 25-30 lakh rupees for a good operating microscope, phaco machine, A-scan, slit lamp, OPD instruments etc. On the other hand, a group practice

would usually be with members taking interest in different sub-specialties, which would need about 2-3 crore rupees, if the set-up for all sub-specialties is included. If this is shared among say 5 people, it would give a cost of 40-50 lakhs per person. Of course, it is possible to have a group start only with phaco set-up, but it would be most impractical in a new set-up for all group members to focus only on cataracts in a limited base of initial patients. While, there may be many variations to the basic concept of group practice and these examples may not be universally true, but this applies to most situations. Also, the idea of having more flexible schedules and personal time generally isn't true, for the amount of work increases as the size of practice increases and also because of heightened patient demands. However, the system of Group Practice certainly allows for some leeway in situations like illness, personal functions etc., without breaking the patient chain, unlike in a Solo Practice.

So, in a nutshell, Group Practice is not so much about making quick money with minimal investment, even while working less and having more free time, *but is more about achieving a broader vision and being able to do better quality work with cutting edge technology*. The patients are also benefited as all sub-specialties and cross-opinions are available under the same roof. The patient care improves and the cost to the patient also comes down in some situations, not to forget situations like the dreaded nucleus drop, which can be immediately taken care of. This kind of group also attracts more patients, because it looks bigger and better and raises lesser doubts among patients.

Some of us believe that Group Practice remains an elusive goal, which everyone wants to achieve, but is mostly out of reach. The most common reason for this failure is inability among the members to share a common vision. And that is the reason why Group Practice will always be a difficult to achieve utopian ideal, for it is impossible for any 2-3 or 4 people to agree on everything for a long time. Differences of opinion are bound to arise, egos are going to be ruffled, financial matters will become more and more touchy as the revenues increase; and that is perfect recipe for divorce. So, are doctors not suited for this concept and should give it up? No, but make sure you find the right partners for your group. Discuss your goals and priorities very clearly before associating rather than somehow roping in people to provide capital and then realizing that everyone is moving in a different direction. Also, there doesn't have to be a set pattern for Group Practice. There can be

many variations on the basic theme of sharing expenses, administrative duties and financial returns, based on the unique requirements of your practice setting. For example, in a big city, it is possible to have independent OPD set-ups in different parts of the city and share a common operating facility. In a smaller city, it is possible to have some mobile equipments, which can be shared on a rotatory basis with someone being independently responsible for maintenance. The most important requirement for any arrangement to be successful is of course, honesty and trying to avoid any one up-man ship. But some of medical sub-specialties (like ophthalmology) being so competitive, one up-man ship can be avoided only if there are very rational and acceptable models for revenue sharing. It is a good idea to have revenue sharing based on share in capital as well as individual productivity.

It is extremely important to remember that *perfect equality is a myth and there is no such thing as a 50-50 partnership.* It is just like marriage where you must "keep your eyes wide open before marriage and half shut afterwards". Often, it is a rewarding exercise to stop comparing your deal with your colleague's deal and compare instead with what you would achieve if you went Solo. In practices, with members belonging to different age groups, there must be some acceptance for change in opinions that come with age as well as changed training etc.

In summary, if we can learn to live with our small differences and inequalities and enjoy variety, we must try to form groups with clear and well-discussed goals. If not, there is absolutely nothing wrong in going Solo and singing your own tune, for a group is worthwhile only if it can deliver a coordinated '*jugalbandi*' rather than an uncoordinated cacophony.

Take Home Message:

➢ Independent practice allows you to run the business on your terms without interference. It could, however, put a financial strain and additional burden of responsibilities on you.

➢ Group practices are cost-effective and collaborative. You learn from each other and improve patient care by utilizing each other's positive qualities. The only trouble is that it can often lead to internal conflicts caused by distrust and jealousy.

➢ Always weigh the pros and cons of both types of practices before making a decision.

Chapter 28
Time Management and Work-Life Balance

"I recommend you to take care of the minutes, for the hours will take care of themselves."

- Lord sterfield

Maintaining Work-Life Balance

Being a health care professional, you have devoted your life towards caring for others, which is not just a remarkable thing but can also consume your life since it is difficult to switch off your health care provider mode. And now that you are launching your own private practice, it is about to get even more consuming for you.

While it is one of the greatest professions, if you are not careful, it can start affecting your physical and mental health. This is the reason why work-life balance is essential. It helps you to give your 100% to your job while also getting the rest you need and have time for your social life. A work-life balance helps in preventing burnouts as well, which is one of the most common problems for health care providers.

Burnout is a "pervasive health care problem characterized by a loss of emotional, mental and physical energy due to continued job-related stress." If not treated properly, this can lead to severe dissatisfaction with work which eventually leads the health care provider to make medical errors and non-compliance of work as well as experience depression, substance abuse and other mental issues.

A work-life balance helps in establishing a healthy relationship between your work and social life. It decreases levels of stress, increases work satisfaction, enhances concentration, focus on your health.

Following are some effective ways in which you and your staff members can enhance work-life balance:

Take Personal Time

Taking personal time is rather crucial to attaining work-life balance. Otherwise, you will burnout and won't be able to perform your duties as a health care provider and the owner of your private practice. You will eventually run out of empathy, patience, clarity and energy – all of which are crucial elements for providing the best health care service. Therefore, it is best to take some personal time off once or twice a year as per your schedule in order to keep yourself physically and mentally healthy.

Other than that, you can even take personal time every day where you completely switch off your work mode and work on your mental and physical health. You can:

- Spend time with your family.
- Read a book that is not work-related.
- Go out for a walk.
- Sleep.
- Make ways to have a healthy diet.

You can do anything that you enjoy which gives you a break from your work.

Reduce your Work Hours

While you would be putting in even more hours once you start your own practice, it is essential that once things have settled down, you try to reduce your work hours at least once a week in order to decrease the stress levels. This should be allowed for all your employees. When the entire team gets some time off or at least reduced hours once a week or two, you will notice a drastic increase in the overall productivity levels.

Adjust on-call Time

Make sure you or any of your employees are not constantly on call for long periods of time. It is essential that you keep on adjusting and revising the on-call time so that everyone gets some time to relax and unwind from the pressures of work. When a health care provider is on call and is constantly working, it gets even harder to switch off work mode which can greatly impact the physical and mental health. As a result, their productivity and quality of service is also negatively affected.

Consider Tele-medicine Appointments

If it is the nature of your practice to be constantly on call, you can also

consider tele-medicine appointments for the not-so-serious cases or consultations. You can do this right from your home or any other place of convenience. You would even be able to help more patients in a shorter time and free up time to spend time with family and friends.

Take a 15-minute Break Every Day

While it is understandable to have back-to-back appointments with patients, you need to understand that you need a bit of time each day to recharge, even if it is only for 15 minutes. Switching gears for every patient can be exhausting while you also take care of the paperwork and other tasks of being the owner of your own private practice. You need to have a break to rest. If it is not possible to have a long break, you can schedule shorter breaks throughout your day, for instance, 3 to 5 minutes break after consulting three to four patients. You should also encourage this among your employees to prevent burnout and to maintain the quality of the service.

Delegate or Outsource Tasks

While it is understandable that being the owner of your private practice, you would want to manage everything on your own for several reasons including cutting the cost of labor, being a perfectionist, etc., however, you need to keep in mind that it is not possible for you to do everything on your own. This can be fine during the initial stages of your private practice, eventually, the workload will increase and it would get impossible for you to handle everything on your own without making errors. Therefore, it is important that you delegate some tasks or outsource them so that you can manage other important things effectively.

Reflect on your Work

Dealing with the pressure and stress of work, added with the responsibilities of your private practice can become exhausting and demanding. It gets super easy to forget about the incredible work you are doing. Make it a point to reflect on your nature of work, the patients you have helped and the difference you are making. Do this every night when you are about to sleep. Remind yourself why you are working this hard and how you are changing the lives of many patients. This will help you in enhancing your work satisfaction level and reduce your stress and frustration.

Ensure that you follow these tips and encourage your employees to do it too so that you and your entire health care team can establish and maintain a

healthy work-life balance.

Useful Tips for Managing your Time

Being a health care provider as well as the owner of your private practice means you would have plenty of responsibilities to take care of. It can get easy to lose track of time or make mistakes when you have so much going on. This is why you need to learn to manage your time well. Following are some useful time management tips that can help health care professionals manage their time effectively:

Make Goals

Making goals, not just for the month and week, but also for every day is the best way you can manage your time well. This will also help you to create a sense of purpose for your entire day and keep you motivated. You must write down all your goals, break them down to shorter tasks if needed, delegate tasks, maintain a to-do list to ensure you don't forget anything. Review your weekly and monthly goals, make adjustments and notice your productivity improving.

Learn to Prioritize

Prioritizing tasks will help you in better time management and will ensure that you don't miss an important deadline or an appointment. It will keep you on track and will prevent pressure and panic of missing a deadline or forgetting an urgent task. You will feel more accountable when you have a to-do list and a list of priority tasks you need to finish. It will enhance the productivity and efficiency level of your overall private practice (Figure 28.1).

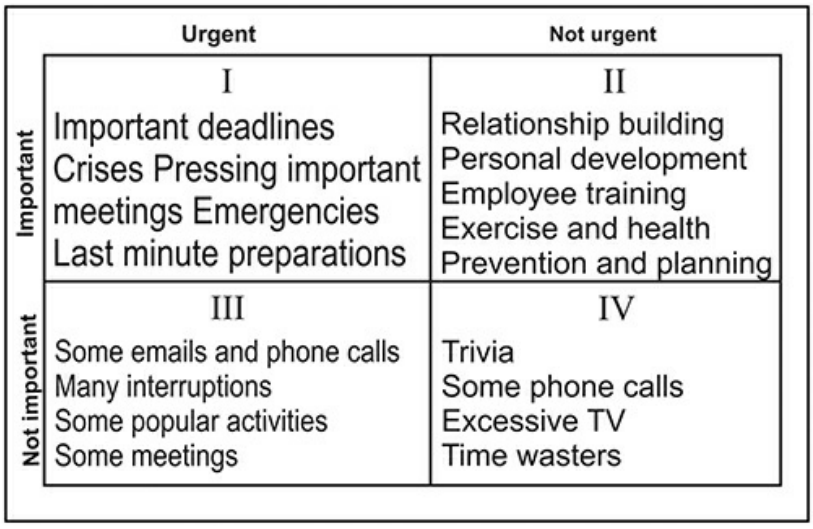


Figure 28.1: Prioritize each task as Important, Not Important, Urgent, Not Urgent.

Become Tech Savvy

Technology is your friend. Make sure you digitalize everything so that it consumes less time and energy. It will also help in reducing the risk of human error and keep everything in one place. Moreover, it is also the best way to keep everyone in the loop and ensure that each and every team member is instantly informed about any changes, adjustments or urgent work that needs to be immediately taken care of.

Utilize Electronic Health Records

Electronic health care records are essential in maintaining and organizing the entire patient's history, current situation, as well as pending follow-ups. It reduces paperwork, makes it easy for the entire health care team to instantly check the patient record with a few clicks or taps, it also keeps everything organized. Most importantly, it also saves precious time.

Learn to Say No

You need to be realistic about the amount of your work and take on more projects and tasks accordingly. Owning a private practice means your friends, family, colleagues or partners might ask you for favors which is perfectly fine if you are able to manage but not at all if you already have a jam-packed schedule. It is important that you learn to say no without feeling guilty about it. Taking on more than you can manage is a surefire way of completely exhausting yourself and also messing up your entire schedule. This will also drastically decrease your level of productivity and increase your stress. You need to check your schedule before you say yes to any task, project or favor.

Take-Home Message

➢ A work-life balance helps in preventing burnouts, which is one of the most common problems for health care providers.

➢ Being a health care professional can consume your life since it is difficult to switch off your health care provider mode.

➢ A work-life balance helps in establishing a healthy relationship between your work and social life.

➢ It is important to take some personal time off once or twice a year as per your schedule in order to keep you physically and mentally healthy.

➢ Keep on adjusting and revising the on-call time so that everyone gets some time to relax and unwind from the pressures of work.

➢ Delegate some tasks or outsource them so that you can manage other important things effectively.

➢ Remind yourself why you are working this hard and how you are changing the lives of many patients.

➢ Prioritizing tasks will help you with better time management.

➢ Make sure you digitalize everything so that it consumes less time and energy. Electronic health care records are essential in maintaining your patients' records.

➢ It is important that you learn to say no without feeling guilty about it. Check your schedule before you say yes to any task, project or favor.

Chapter 29
Managing Stress and Burnout During the Medical Practice: How to Stay Happy as a Doctor?

"If you had to define stress, it would not be far off if you said it was the process of living. The process of living is the process of having stress imposed on you and reacting to it."

- Stanley J. Sarnoff

Some branches of medicine have greater doctor happiness as revealed in an annual survey in the USA. Medscape surveyed more than 14,000 doctors from over 30 specialties in the USA, who were asked about a range of topics, including burnout and bias against patients. The survey also collected demographic data such as gender, race and ethnicity. The survey also asked doctors about their happiness at work. The survey found that the highest rates of physicians reporting being "happy" or "very happy" at work were seen among Dermatologists (43 percent), Ophthalmologists (42 percent) and Allergy and Immunology specialists (41 percent). The lowest rates were seen among Emergency Medicine specialists (28 percent), Nephrologists (24 percent) and Rheumatologists (24 percent).

The first rule for being a happy doctor is very simple – it simply means caring for your patients and keeping them satisfied. Treat all your patients like VIPs – whether they come from rural areas or from posh colonies of the city. Remember that the relationship with our patients is at the heart of our professional role – and a healthy doctor-patient relationship nurtures both patient and doctor! Medical practice is really about service, not science and the true meaning of the art of medicine is found in the relationships we have with our patients. Savor your patients. When a patient thanks you for your work or says that you have become like a family member, stop and relish that happy moment. Those moments are the real reward for being a doctor if you can slow down to let them in. When it comes to getting positive feedback, no profession in the world comes close to the medical profession! The joy of medicine is in doing good, which is why patients still confer a special status

on us – we need to prove ourselves worthy of it.

The secret of happy doctors and health professionals is happy and satisfied patients. However, medical professionals can be associated with stress. It is important for doctors to develop interests and friends outside medicine. While it is true that medicine can be a demanding mistress, don't let her take over your life. Good doctors are well-rounded individuals, who have an open mind and are curious about everything. Having outside interests will not only make you a better and balanced individual, it will also help make you a better doctor, as you apply what you learn from other fields to your medical practice.

Stress among Doctors and Its Management

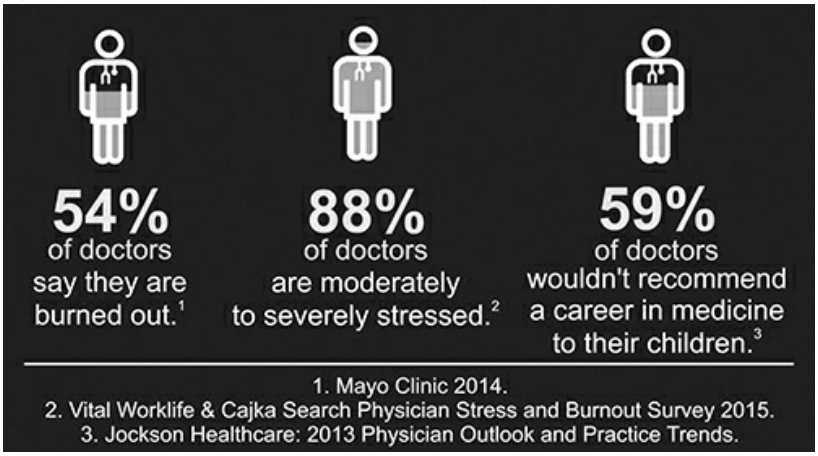


Figure 29.1 A: Stress Among Doctors

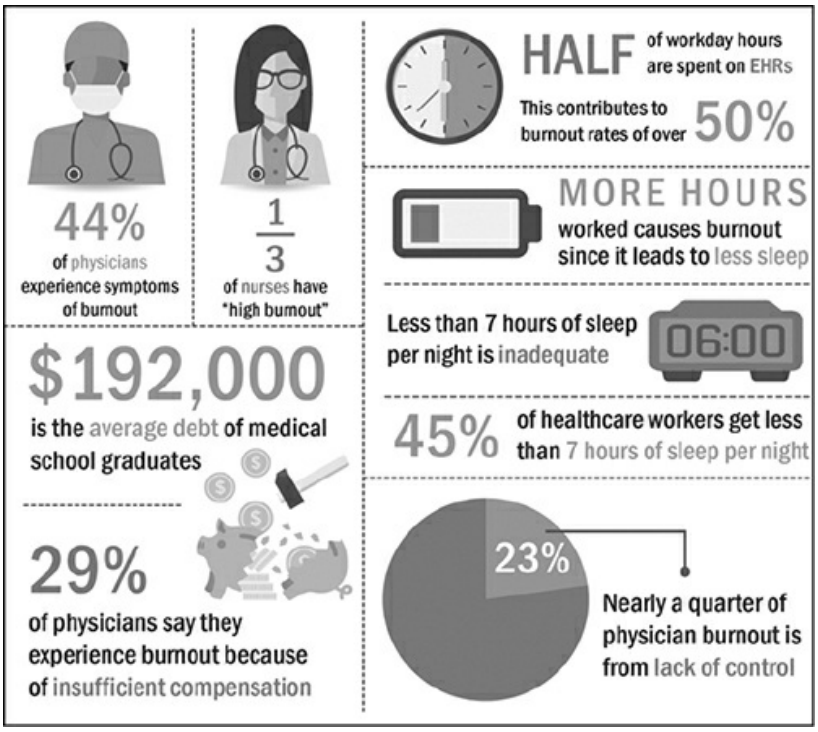

44%
of physicians experience symptoms of burnout
1/3
of nurses have "high burnout"
HALF of workday hours are spent on EHRs
This contributes to burnout rates of over 50%
MORE HOURS
worked causes burnout since it leads to less sleep
Less than 7 hours of sleep per night is inadequate
06:00
$192,000
is the average debt of medical school graduates
45% of healthcare workers get less than 7 hours of sleep per night
29%
of physicians say they experience burnout because of insufficient compensation
23%
Nearly a quarter of physician burnout is from lack of control

Figure 29.1 B: Stress Among Doctors

Stress is a typical physical and psychological reaction to the demands and pressures life throws at you (Figure 29). Stress in a small amount can actually be good and give you the motivation to enhance your performance. However, multiple challenges and continuous stress can easily push your psychological and physical capability to cope with stress.

Our brain is fixed with alarm systems to protect us from such threats. It signals our body when under threat to release hormones which enhances our blood pressure and heart rate. This is usually the fight or flight response to stress. When the threat of stress is gone, the body eventually goes back to its relaxed and normal state. However, if the stress levels continuously increase, these alarm systems inside our brain never switch off. Over time, this chronic stress can result in health and mental issues. This is especially true for health care providers who are constantly under pressure to provide high-quality care to their patients.

Reactions to Stress

There are two main reactions that make up an individual's response to stress. The first one, already mentioned above, is the fight or flight response and the second one is General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS). It is highly possible that you experience both of these responses simultaneously.

Fight or Flight

The fight or flight response is the short term and the most basic survival response. This is typically triggered when you experience a shock or see/experience something which your body perceives as a threat. Your brain releases stress hormones which prepares your body to either fight the threat or hide from it. This can energize you but might also make you irritable, anxious and excitable.

The main issue with this response is that while it does help in dealing with events or situations that can be life-threatening, it can be experienced every day when you are working, managing deadlines and patients and other important tasks. Continuously experiencing this can ultimately take a toll on your health, both mentally and physically.

General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS)

This is the usual response to exposure to long-term stress. According to experts, individuals deal with stress through the following three phases (Figure 29.2):

- The phase of alarm, where they respond to the stressor.
- The phase of resistance, where they cope with or adapt to the stressor. However, the body is unable to indefinitely keep up with the resistance and as a result, the emotional and physical resources of the individual start depleting.
- The phase of exhaustion, where the body and mind of the individual ‘wear down’ and they are unable to normally function.

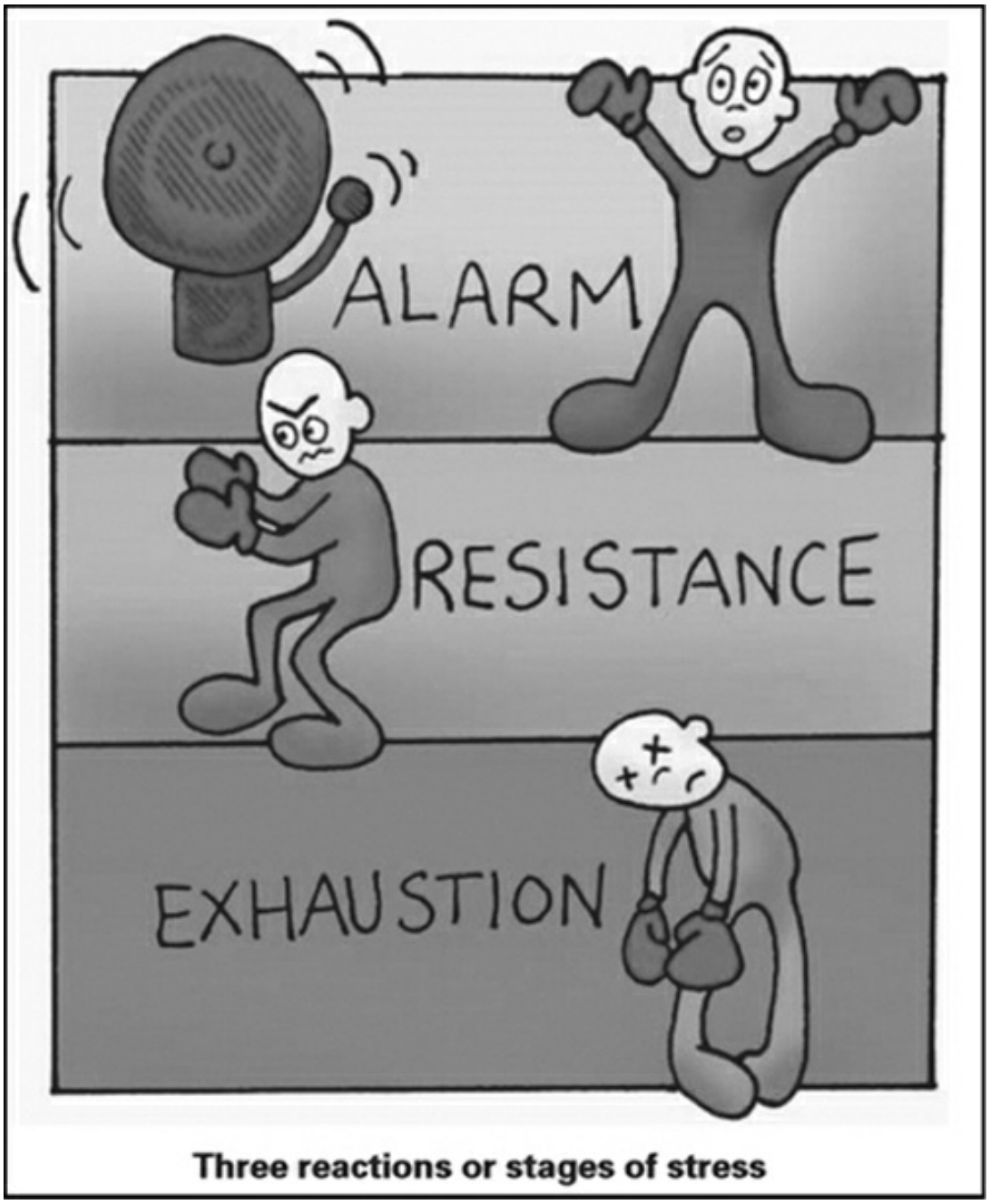


Figure 29.2: Three Reactions or Stages of Stress

Both these responses to stress are linked; the GAS' exhaustion phase is the result of continuously experiencing the fight or flight responses over a long duration of time.

When you encounter a distressing situation, you automatically make two judgments, which are mostly unconscious. Firstly, you determine whether the situation is threatening – a threat to your reputation, time, values, social

standing or survival. This triggers the fight or flight response and the GAS alarm phase. Secondly, you determine whether you have the right and adequate resources to handle the threat. These resources include strength, energy, emotional capabilities, knowledge, time and more.

Your level of stress depends on how much out of control you feel and the way you tackle the situation at hand.

Signs of Stress

All individuals react differently to stress. However, the most common symptoms and signs of increasing amount of stress are as follows:

- Constantly feeling overloaded or overwhelmed
- Drastic weight loss or gain
- Angry and irritability episodes
- Consistent fatigue
- Social isolation or withdrawal
- Compulsive or obsessive behaviors
- Concentration problems
- Insomnia or excessive sleeping
- Panic attacks
- Frequent nausea, stomach pain or heartburn
- Sweaty or cold feet and hands
- Consistent headaches

If you experience even some of these signs or notice these symptoms in any of your employees, it is crucial that you immediately tackle the situation before you or your employee experiences burnout.

Consequences of Stress

Stress can have a major impact on your ability to perform your job effectively. It can also impact the way you deal with your employees and your patients. This can eventually start negatively affecting your mental and physical well-being, your relationships with patients, employees, colleagues and loved ones and can also have a negative impact on your ability to manage your private practice.

Long-term stress can also result in health issues like a weakened immune

system, high blood pressure, depression, stroke, cardiovascular disease and burnout. While being in the health care profession, it is normal to face numerous challenges and pressures at work. However, it gets easy for health care professionals to get too consumed in their work and forget to take care of their health. Many don't even realize that they are under stress since they get too used to their high-pressure job. Moreover, even if they do recognize the signs of stress, they choose to ignore it or think that it will eventually get better and fail to think about the negative consequences that high-stress level can cause.

Meditation and Exercise

The best way to manage stress is to do regularly exercise and meditation. While the idea of doing physical exercises might not sound soothing to you, it is one of the most effective means of reducing your stress levels and energizing yourself. The rhythmic exercises make you attain a flow of repetitive movements which ultimately becomes relaxing. Try doing the following exercises:

- Climbing
- Rowing
- Dancing
- Swimming
- Walking
- Running

To attain the maximum level of stress relief, it is best to add a few minutes of meditation to your workout. Following are a few useful meditation tricks you or your employees can use in order to manage the daily stress and pressures of work:

Deep Breathing – I have been practicing deep breathing (*pranayama*) for the past 40 years. This is a great technique, especially for beginners and it is also effective when things start becoming overwhelming or if you are having a panic attack. This can also be done anywhere and at anytime. All you have to do is focus on your breathing. Keep on listening and feeling yourself exhale and inhale as you breathe. Ensure that your breathing is slow and deep. If you feel your attention wandering, gently turn your mind back towards your breathing. Do this for at least two minutes and repeat if

necessary.

Body Scanning (*Yoga Nidra*) – This is another effective technique to relax your mind and reduce your stress levels. In this, you have to concentrate on different parts of your body at a time. Become fully aware of the sensation of your body, for instance, your hand touching the smooth table, your feet on the ground, your clothes against your skin and the tension in your muscles, the warmth of your skin or the pain in some part of your body. This helps you become more aware of your body and its sensation. You can combine this with a deep breathing technique as well.

Walking and Meditating – Go out for a short walk and combine it with meditation. This is a healthy and effective way of relaxing and also getting the exercise your body needs. Slow down the pace of your walk and concentrate on each and every movement your body makes. Avoid concentrating on a specific destination and instead focus on the movement of your feet and legs and how your hands move as you walk. If you have trouble concentrating, try repeating the action you are making, for instance, moving, lifting your foot, placing it on the ground, right hand swinging back, etc.

Reading and Reflecting – Reading is a great way of relaxing and distracting your mind which gradually lowers your stress levels. Take a few minutes to read your favorite book and think about it. You can also read a quote, a sacred text, listen to music and reflect on them. You can even reflect on some positive or profound words you have heard.

Offering Gratitude – Here you can focus on being thankful for what you have, what you are doing, your family, your friends, your colleagues, your private practice, your team, your patients and so much more. When you focus on the positive things in your life, the things you have accomplished, it can ease the stress and frustration you are feeling.

Make it a point to do at least 15 minutes of exercise five times a week and five minutes of meditation every day. Encourage your employees to do the same. If your budget allows, you can even create a small exercise or meditation room where your employees can spend a few minutes working out or relaxing (Figure 29.3).

Figure 29.3: Measures to Manage Stress and Burnout for Doctors

Workplace Stress Management

As health care providers have to perform more duties with less time at hand, it is understandable when things start becoming frantic and frazzled no matter how much efficiently and calmly they want to perform their tasks. This adds to their stress and can further impact their work negatively. Excessive stress starts interfering with the levels of productivity and also starts depleting you spiritually, mentally and physically. Hospitals, private practices and other health facilities are indeed stressful places to work. However, there are various ways in which you can manage workplace stress and boost your productivity while maintaining your physical and mental health.

Following are some useful tips for workplace stress management:

Have an Early Start

The most productive and least stressful day is the one that starts positively. It is a norm to wake up late, race through breakfast, get ready and speed your way to work, while also trying to squeeze in a stop for coffee. When your mornings are rushed, you will continue to feel rushed throughout the day and stay under considerable stress. If this is your normal routine, you need to stop immediately and start waking up at least 10 minutes early. Take a few

minutes before sleeping at night to plan your mornings. Having a proper schedule for the morning can help you in starting your day without stress and hustle.

Don’t Skip Meals

This is a common thing for health care providers to do. Since they have a jam-packed schedule, they often skip lunch or even breakfast. This is an unwise move. You need to keep in mind that you need to eat in order to maintain your stamina and to keep yourself energized throughout the day. You can offer compensatory healthy meals or food at subsidized rates at your private practice to encourage your entire staff to have proper food and avoid skipping meals.

Have Adequate Sleep

Sleep is required by your body to re-energize itself from a tiring and exhausting day at work. Without the proper amount of sleep, your body is not able to recharge properly and you feel tired and irritable throughout the day which also prevents you from dealing with stress in healthy ways. Lack of sleep also adds to your stress levels as you end up experiencing fatigue. This is indeed a vicious circle. Ensure you have enough sleep at night and even try to catch some power naps during the day if you have some time.

Laugh!

It has been proven by science that laughter is indeed the best medicine. Laughter decreases your levels of stress and tension and boosts positivity and your spirits. Don’t stop yourself from having a few light moments with your employees; make it a norm in your private practice to forward jokes to one another, funny memes and embarrassing stories through emails, bulletin boards or other means of communication. Encourage pleasant interaction among employees so that they can unwind, relax and reduce their stress levels.

Maintain Positive Thinking

Positive thinking is another effective way of reducing stress from work. There are times at workplace where things don’t go the right way no matter what you do. This is especially true in a health care setting. Handling patients and their loved ones can become stressful and even at times, depressing. Ensure that your private practice has a culture where employees boost positivity, help one another cope with pressure and stress through

encouragement and positive statements. Make it a point to reduce and eliminate discouraging and negative comments.

Have a Good Talk

Whenever you feel too tensed, stressed out or under pressure, make it a point to share it with someone. Vent out your feelings to a trusted friend, family member or colleague. This is a good way of reducing your stress and decreasing some of the pressure. Most of the time, speaking about those worries and problems can change your perspective and even help you out with a solution. Moreover, the individual you have a talk with can also help you out with your problems.

Accept Things you can't Change

This is something all health care professionals should realize and follow. There are some things that just can't control while there are others that you can. It is important for you to understand that no matter how hard you try, certain things might not work out the way you want them to. Learn to accept those things that you can't change. Try to have a positive outlook and learn from your experiences.

Take-Home Message

➢ The important rule for being a happy doctor means compassionate caring for your patients.

➢ Stress is a typical physical and psychological reaction to the demands and pressures life throws at you.

➢ Over time, this chronic stress can result in health and mental issues. This is especially true for health care providers who are constantly under pressure to provide high-quality care to their patients.

➢ The fight or flight response is the short-term and the most basic survival response. This is typically triggered when you experience a shock or see/experience something which your body perceives as a threat.

➢ General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) is the usual response to exposure to long-term stress.

➢ Your level of stress depends on how much out of control you feel and the way you tackle the situation at hand.

➢ If you experience signs of stress or notice symptoms of stress in any of your employees, it is crucial that you immediately tackle the situation before

you or your employee experiences burnout.

➢ Long-term stress can also result in health issues like a weakened immune system, high blood pressure, depression, stroke, cardiovascular disease and burnout.

➢ The best way to manage stress is to regularly exercise and meditate.

➢ The rhythmic exercises make you attain a flow of repetitive movements which ultimately becomes relaxing.

➢ To attain the maximum level of stress relief, it is best to add a few minutes of meditation to your workout.

➢ Having a proper schedule for the morning can help you in starting your day without stress and without rushing.

➢ You need to keep in mind that you need to eat in order to maintain your stamina and to keep you energized throughout the day.

➢ Ensure that you have enough sleep at night and even try to catch some power naps during the day if you have some time.

➢ Encourage pleasant interaction among employees so that they can unwind, relax and reduce their stress levels.

➢ Positive thinking is another effective way of reducing stress from work.

➢ Whenever you feel too tensed, stressed out or under pressure, make it a point to share it with someone.

➢ It is important for you to understand that no matter how hard you try, certain things might not work out the way you want them to.

Chapter 30
Learning to Become a Leader

"Leadership is about making employees feel safe, providing them a workplace environment to thrive, and giving them access to the right tools and resources to be successful."

- Glenn Llopis

Difference between Leading and Managing

Typically, the terms, manager and leader are used synonymously but in reality, both are greatly different from one another. If you want to become a great leader for your employees and ensure the high productivity and prosperity of your private practice, you need to first understand the difference between leading and managing.

When you are managing people, you have a big responsibility on your shoulders. You have the potential of each and every employee in your hands and you need to determine how to use all that potential in the best way possible. You are responsible for assigning the responsibilities and tasks of each employee and also monitoring their progress, you have to offer the right resources to your employees in order for them to accomplish their tasks and you also hold the power to build up your team or waste away their talents.

On the other hand, being a leader means you are someone who inspires people. A leader is someone whom others follow or want to follow without him/her having to force them. Leaders also have titles that are similar to that of a manager, however, this is not necessary. Leaders have the capability to get the best out of all their employees; they understand their strengths and weakness and utilize their strengths while helping them in working on their weaknesses. For them, prosperity of the organization is of course important, but so is the development of their employees.

If you want to become a leader for your employees, you have to recognize their strengths and achievements. Attaining positive recognition from a leader is one of the best factors that help in enhancing job satisfaction. According to studies, those employees who receive regular praise, appreciation and

recognition from their leaders have the highest level of job satisfaction. Their productivity levels also increase as well as their motivation and strive to work harder for their leader and their company. Moreover, this is also an effective way of establishing and maintaining loyalty for the leader and the organization.

Another major thing that leaders are known to do is to collaborate on the decisions they make. A manager has the ability to make good decisions and allocate tasks without consulting their team. On the other hand, a leader does the opposite. While the leader recognizes the strengths and abilities of each and every employee, they consult the employees when making decisions that concern them. A good leader knows that employees prefer to be more involved and have a say in the decisions at work. This is a surefire way of enhancing their productivity and also motivates them to work harder. These among many are integral qualities of leaders that earn them respect among their employees and help them in earning their employees' trust.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

As a leader of your private practice, you indeed have plenty of responsibilities. Even after putting in plenty of effort and with pure intentions, there are bound to be some mistakes that might happen. This is especially true if you want to transform from being a manager to becoming a leader. While some mistakes are inevitable, there are some that can easily be avoided.

Following are some of the most common mistakes which are made by leaders and ways in which you can avoid them in order to become an outstanding leader:

Trying to be 'One of the Gang'

No matter how much you want, you need to keep in mind that you are not one of your employees, you are their leader. Many leaders make the mistake of trying to be too friendly with their employees in the hope of being the funny, reachable and understanding leader. This is an unwise move. While being friendly, reachable and understanding are crucial factors in becoming a good leader, there might be times when you have to assert your authority. Being too friendly might encourage your employees to stop taking your orders seriously. You have to hold this position of authority from the start, but ensure that you are not rude, mean or offensive.

Bad Delegation

Another common mistake some leaders make is not delegating properly. This can happen in two ways. Firstly, the leaders are unable to come to terms with the fact their team members can do a good job or a better job than them. They prefer to do tasks on their own and fail to delegate.

Secondly, the leader simply hands out tasks and responsibilities without keeping in mind the strengths and talents of the employees. They don't really care about where the strength lies and just want to get the work done.

It is important to understand that you are a leader and you are the one who hired your employees based on their experience and education. You need to learn to trust their abilities. While it would be tempting to take charge of everything, it is essential that you leave it up to your employees to accomplish tasks that are assigned to them.

Secondly, you need to take some time out to understand and determine the strengths and capabilities of all your employees. Find out what they are best at, consult with them and then assign tasks. You will be surprised at the improvement in the productivity and quality of work.

Too Much Focus on the Big Picture

Indeed, it is important to keep sight of the big picture, the ultimate goal you have for your private practice. However, being a leader means understanding that not everything would go your way, understanding that there might be tasks and projects that you would have to tackle that might steer you a bit away from the big picture. Avoid looking too far in the future and trying to make it work. Let a few things go and try to go with the flow. The most important thing is to focus on the present. This surely doesn't mean that you completely lose sight of your end goal. Maintain a balance and understand the priorities (Figure 30.1).

Lack of Communication

While many believe that communication is one of the vital elements of success, a majority neglect it when it comes to actually practicing it. Lack of proper communication is a major mistake that leaders and managers make which leads to lower rate of motivation and productivity. In order to become a good leader, it is important that you polish your communication skills and enhance the entire communication process of your private practice. Bad or lack of communication can only hinder the progress of the entire practice and

it can also result in medical errors and malpractice which can even prove fatal for your patients. Ensure that you regularly communicate with all your employees and the communication process is smooth and clear throughout the private practice.

Not Giving Enough Time to the Team

Being the leader and the owner of your private practice means you can easily get wrapped up in your tasks and responsibilities. This means you would barely get time for your team. This is another common mistake leaders make. It is not enough to simply assign tasks to all your employees and send them emails of appreciation and recognize their efforts through emails or in meetings once every 6 months. Moreover, it is also not enough that you tell them that if they need you, they can come straight to you. It is important that you actually show them this. Regular meetings are one of the most effective ways of ensuring you are personally connected with all your team members. This way they will be more open to you about problems they are facing, any ideas they want to share and any other issue that needs to be discussed.

5 Tips Every Business Leader Should Follow

Figure 30.1: Few Tips Every Business Leader should Follow.

Deciding Your Leadership Style

If you want to become a leader to your employees instead of just a manager, you first need to determine the type of leader you want to become. If you are unsure about your leadership style, the following five questions can help you determine which type of leader you are:

How would you Prefer Helping People?

Think back on the times you have worked with teams. How were you able to help them? When would you jump in to help out? Why would you want to help out? How were you able to contribute? Do you prefer to let others work out the problems on their own and jump in only when they are in a crisis? It is possible this is how you would be when you become a leader. Do you prefer to look for ways in which your team can improve? Do you want to

offer continuous feedback and advice so that the individuals can work on their weaknesses and strengths? Then your leadership style would be more like coaching and mentoring. Remember, there isn't any right or wrong style of leadership. The best approach is whatever suits your personality and you make it work.

Who was your Favorite Manager or Leader Like?

Your favorite leader or manager can also have an influence on your leadership style. Who was your favorite manager throughout your professional career? What were the main attributes you liked? What was their style? How did they help you? How would they help you learn and improve more? Why was their style or method effective?

Who was your least Favorite Manager or Leader Like?

Now think back on the managers or leaders you liked the least or who was the worst of them. Which of the traits they had you detested the most? Everyone has at least one manager that they never liked or had difficulty working with. There are many who are too dominant and want to have their own way, which means, they don't encourage innovative ideas or creativity among their team members. This restricts the level of productivity as well as motivation among the members of the team. Moreover, there are others who leave everything with their team members and prefer that they take care of all their problems themselves. It is important that you take note of the attributes or methods of your least favorite managers you detested the most and ensure that you don't repeat those methods with your employees.

What are the Things that are Fulfilling to You?

Next, you must look back at the times you felt most fulfilled in your career. What were the tasks or things you performed that gave you a sense of accomplishment and pride? What were the circumstances that led to it? Was it a new skill you learned? A lead in a project you successfully completed? High praise from your leader? Opportunity to work on a challenging project? These are the things that you can do for your employees as well to make them feel accomplished and to help them grow professionally.

How Integral are Social Relationships for you at Work?

You do like to have frequent lunches, dinners or hangouts with your colleagues? Did you have strong ties with your colleagues? The way you feel about social relationships at your workplace can also influence your

leadership style. It would mean you might want to create social trust and a sense of belonging among your employees so that they can work in improved unity. Or you might want everyone to stay professional and not indulge in chatter or social gatherings to enhance productivity levels. Once again, neither of these approaches is either right or wrong. It all greatly depends on your personality and preferences.

It is essential that whatever leadership style you adopt should be beneficial for you, your team and your overall private practice. As long as productivity, motivation and satisfaction levels of your private practice are high, your leadership style would work for you.

Take-Home Message

➢ The terms manager and leader are used synonymously but in reality, both are greatly different from one another.

➢ When you are managing people, you have a big responsibility on your shoulders. You have the potential of each and every employee in your hands and you need to determine how to use all that potential in the best way possible.

➢ Being a leader means you are someone who inspires people. A leader is someone whom others follow or want to follow without him/her having to force them.

➢ If you want to become a leader for your employees, you have to recognize their strengths and achievements.

➢ A manager has the ability to make good decisions and allocate tasks without consulting their team. On the other hand, a leader does the opposite.

➢ A good leader knows that employees prefer to be more involved and have a say in the decisions at work.

➢ While being friendly, reachable and understanding are crucial factors in becoming a good leader, there might be times when you have to assert your authority.

➢ While it would be tempting to take charge of everything, it is essential that you leave it up to your employees to accomplish tasks that are assigned to them.

➢ In order to become a good leader, it is important that you polish up your communication skills and enhance the entire communication process of your

private practice.

➢ Regular meetings are one of the most effective ways of ensuring you are personally connected with all your team members.

Chapter 31
Practicing Mindfulness to Enhance Positivity

"Focus on the journey, not the destination. Joy is found not in finishing an activity but in doing it."

- Greg Anderson

Benefits of Mindfulness

Training health care providers about the importance of mindfulness meditation and the right techniques can help in enhancing the overall quality of care in your private practice. This can not only benefit the patients but will also help your employees manage their stress levels better and improve their mental health.

Group activities or plans that focus on self-improvement and personal awareness are an effective way to promote a positive mindset. It is important for health care institutions to implement such mindfulness programs in order to implement an environment that enhances clear communication, decreases stress and supports mindful practices among the entire staff.

Following are some of the major benefits of practicing mindfulness:

Enhances the Overall Well-being

Regularly performing mindfulness exercises supports and promotes attitudes that contribute towards a satisfied and fulfilling life. Research has indicated that there is solid evidence which indicates that mindfulness relates to life satisfaction, positive thinking and an overall improvement in well-being. It leads to enhanced self-awareness which results in decreasing anxiety and stress. Moreover, it also decreases the risk of developing health issues.

Improves Mental Health

Mindfulness meditation helps manage a number of mental issues including Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, anxiety disorder, eating disorders, substance abuse and depression.

Helps in Empathizing more and being Compassionate with

Patients

There have been many studies that have determined the connection between mindfulness and empathy. Once the stress levels decrease and they learn to handle the frustration and pressures at work, they would be able to better empathize with their patients. They are able to treat their patients compassionately and actually listen to what their patients have to say without judging or negatively reacting. This further increases the satisfaction of the patients.

Enhances Working Memory

Working memory is the system that stores information temporarily in the mind for future recall and processing. Many studies have found a strong connection between working memory and attention. Mindfulness helps in enhancing attention to detail and memory.

Enhanced Usage of Strengths

With regular mindfulness practices, you and your employees would be able to use your strengths in the best possible manner to reap optimal results. Mindful meditation doesn't just relieve suffering but also helps in cultivating positive strengths and characteristics such as wisdom, compassion and more. It helps one to focus on the present which helps the health care providers to offer the optimal care to all their patients with decreased chances of mistakes. Mindfulness helps in avoiding the wandering of mind and focusing on the task at hand. This way you would be able to make better usage of all your strengths since you would be more aware of your inner behavior and state.

Decreases Negative Emotional Reactivity

Mindfulness can help in preventing you from getting too emotional and reacting negatively. This can be super beneficial when it comes to dealing with emotional and difficult patients and/or their family members. You would be able to avoid taking things personally and realize the hurt and fear your patient and their loved ones are in, that is why they are reacting that way. This will help you in keeping a level head and managing the situation the right way.

Promoting Mindfulness among your Clinic Staff

In order to promote mindfulness among your employees, you need to help them understand its importance and how practicing mindfulness can benefit them. It is important that you create a work environment that has a culture of

mindfulness so that it has a positive impact on your employees. You will notice that your employees would become better listeners, more patient and calmer with regular mindfulness exercises. This will enhance the quality of work, improve productivity and enhance their motivations.

Here are a few ways you can promote mindfulness among your employees at your private practice:

- Offer your employees a mindfulness worksheet every week.
- Organize a mindfulness workshop every month.
- Create a room that is specifically designed for mindfulness and meditation.
- Ensure all meetings begin with gratitude.
- Offer therapy sessions for employees.
- Encourage employees to send positive notes to at least one individual each month, who has in any way supported them or encouraged them.
- Encourage employees to leave positive notes, jokes or funny stories to their colleagues.
- Offer opportunities to your employees to share ways to be more mindful and the techniques they found successful.
- Provide monthly or weekly meditation or a yoga course at your private practice.

Embracing and encouraging mindfulness at your private practice can result in numerous benefits. Since working at a hospital is a high-pressure job, you and your employees would be constantly under stress. If the stress levels are not managed well, then it can escalate to physical and mental issues. This is the reason you need to promote mindfulness practices so that stress levels, anxiety and frustration can be handled in a healthy manner. It is also important to keep in mind that these mindfulness practices should be a continuous process.

Mindfulness Group Exercises

For health care providers, self-care is not even included in their list of priorities. This is the reason why health care providers are under constant stress. Even a few minutes of pausing and resetting your focus is integral in attaining peace of mind and handling the pressures of work well. Many studies have linked mindfulness, which is the practice of being fully aware,

accepting and non-judgmental, with enhancement in mental and physical well-being, cognitive performance and increased empathy.

Following are 10 useful group mindfulness exercises that you can implement in your private practice to ensure all your employees are practicing mindfulness. This can be done at the start of the day, during the lunch break or can also be spaced out throughout the day.

1. *Pause when arriving at the workplace. Encourage your employees to take a breather right when they arrive at their desks. Be aware of your body and notice each and every sensation – your back against the seat, your feet touching the floor, your hands resting on the armrest. Next, take slow and deep breaths. Inhale deeply and exhale as long as you can. Count to three as you inhale and exhale. Feel each part of your body relaxing.*
2. *Before going in to see the patient, pay attention to your feet. Focus on how your feet are moving as you walk. Slow down a little, take deep breaths and notice as your feet touch the floor as you move forward. This will help the employees in preparing themselves better before they meet the patient. Even when they are rushed, this exercise for even a minute would lower their stress levels and help them slow down. They will be able to greet their patient while looking and feeling relaxed.*
3. *When washing hands, pause and stand still for a few minutes. Again, focus on your movements. Notice your hand reaching out for the soap, the lather on your hands, the circular movement of your fingers as you scrub your face and hands, the texture and feel of the soap, the temperature of the water, how the water splashes on your face. Focus on these movements and avoid thinking about anything else. Try to be present in the situation. This will help you in being more present for your next appointment.*
4. *Every time you approach a patient, their loved ones or even your colleague, try noticing some details about them. Notice their facial expression, their eye color, how their expressions change as they talk, the way they are standing and the way they are talking. This will help you mentally prepare yourself to be fully present during the interaction. If you notice your mind wandering, acknowledge that and gently stir it back to the present interaction.*
5. *Before an important meeting or interaction, take a few minutes to calm yourself down. Perform breathing exercises by inhaling deeply through*

your nose and then exhaling gently through your mouth. Pause for a while if you have to for 10 to 20 seconds and notice the sensations in your body.

6. *If you are performing some task for a prolonged time, for instance, handling samples, researching on your computer, updating patient records or reading, make sure you periodically look up and widen your peripheral vision. Again, perform deep breathing exercises and notice the different sensations in your body before you return to your work.*
7. *Throughout the day, make sure you pause periodically. Pause for about 5 seconds, close your eyes and start listening to the sounds around you. Try blocking out the sounds in the room you are present in and focus on the sounds at a distance. This is similar as widening your peripheral vision, just with hearing instead. Welcome the sounds you hear without focusing too much on their sources. Simply try to focus on the sounds and enjoy them.*
8. *Any time during the day if you feel tensed, pressured or stressed, try removing yourself from the situation for a while. Leave if you can and head to a quiet place. Go to a nearby bathroom if you are short on time or if there isn't any empty room available. Take deep breaths and then evaluate the source of your issues. Gently remind yourself that it is perfectly fine to feel this way. Put your hand on your chest and focus on your heartbeat. Breathe and repeat to yourself that you can handle this situation and that you are completely okay.*
9. *Always pause after, during and before a tough case or situation. Start noticing and feeling all the sensations in your body, your feet on the ground and the rise and fall of your chest as you breathe. Repeat positive affirmations or statements to yourself to help you calm down. Take deep breaths and get back to the situation or the next task at hand.*
10. *Throughout the day, make sure you notice something beautiful which relaxes you. For instance, it could be the color of the sky, the flowers on your desk, the laughter of the people around you or even a picture of your loved ones. Take a few seconds to completely focus on that thing and notice its beauty. Make sure you enjoy that moment. You can do this at least once a day to help you relax and appreciate small things.*

These are some simple but highly useful exercises that can help you in managing your workload and work stress better. It is best that you encourage

all your employees to perform these mindfulness practices regularly so that it can improve their productiveness, their emotional and mental well-being and help them cope with work stress and pressure in a healthy manner. The best way to make sure that all your employees follow these mindfulness practices is to print out these exercises and place them on notice boards, work desks and even on the doors of the washrooms to remind your employees of these useful practices.

Take-Home Message

➢ Training health care providers about the importance of mindfulness meditation and the right techniques can help in enhancing the overall quality of care in your private practice.

➢ Group activities or plans that focus on self-improvement and personal awareness are an effective way to promote a positive mindset.

➢ Regularly performing mindfulness exercises supports and promotes attitudes that contribute towards a satisfied and fulfilling life.

➢ Mindfulness meditation helps in managing a number of mental issues.

➢ With regular mindfulness practices, you and your employees would be able to use your strengths in the best possible manner to reap optimal results.

➢ Mindfulness helps in avoiding the wandering of the mind and focusing on the task at hand.

➢ Mindfulness can help in preventing you from getting too emotional and reacting negatively.

➢ In order to promote mindfulness among your employees, you need to help them understand its importance and how practicing mindfulness can benefit them.

➢ This will enhance the quality of work, improve productivity and enhance their motivations.

➢ Embracing and encouraging mindfulness at your private practice can result in numerous benefits.

➢ Many studies have linked mindfulness, which is the practice of being fully aware, accepting and non-judgmental, to the enhancement in mental and physical well-being, cognitive performance and increased empathy.

➢ It is best that you encourage all your employees to perform these mindfulness practices regularly so that it can improve their productiveness,

their emotional and mental well-being.

Chapter 32
Monitoring the Progress of the Medical Practice

"It is not by muscle, speed or physical dexterity that great things are achieved, but by reflection, force of character, and judgment; in these qualities old age is usually not only not poorer, but is even richer."

-Cicero

As your private practice continues to evolve, remaining independent and profitable over the long term becomes more achievable. Strategies and goals are integrated into an annual plan that paves the path for sustainable growth, keeping quality of care and the patient experience a top priority. Progress of the practice and performance of the team is monitored throughout the year to make sure the business stays on track.

Keeping a Track of Staff Performances

As the owner of your private practice, it would be your responsibility to monitor the performance of all your employees. This ensures that all the tasks are being handled efficiently and also helps with documenting their performance for the year-end evaluations. This also makes sure that each and every employee is performing their best which means the patient satisfaction would also be high.

Following are the steps you should follow to keep track of the performances:

Step 1: Ensure all Employees are Aware of their Responsibilities

While you would have discussed the job responsibilities with your employees when you hired them, it is essential that you touch base with them after every few months or yearly to ensure that they are heading in the right direction and are still aware of their key responsibilities. Moreover, you should also go through the progress of their goals so that both you and your employees would know where they stand and how much more they have to do to accomplish their yearly goals.

Step 2: Observe the Way they Manage the Tasks

Once a month or whenever you get enough time, try to observe the way your employees perform their tasks. This might result in you noticing some flaws and even strengths in the processes and techniques. You would be able to tackle the weaknesses and enhance the strengths to further enhance the productivity levels.

Step 3: Communicate with your Employees

Ensure you have continuous communication with your employees. Make it a point to ask your employees what tasks they are working on, how they accomplish their tasks and if they have faced or are facing any problems. You can conduct regular meetings with them, if not weekly then at least once a meeting to check up on their progress, issues they have been having or to discuss any particularly difficult patient.

This also gives you an opportunity to help your employees improve themselves and tackle their issues. With proper and continuous interaction with employees, you would be able to determine their productivity levels and how they are contributing to your private practice. This will also help in identifying those employees who are not performing up to the mark and are showing no improvements.

Step 4: Perform Random Checks

You don’t have to do this frequently but surprise checking and monitoring can help you in determining that your employees are handling day-to-day tasks well. Moreover, it would also help in preventing issues like a low level of productivity from becoming major problems like medical errors, loss in revenue or loss of a patient’s trust.

Step 5: Have Open Interaction

Make sure you actually listen to what your employees want to tell you. There are cases where the best way to track some employees is by listening to what other employees have to say about them. It is highly possible that an employee might seem like a highly productive employee to you but in actuality, they are simply taking credit for someone else’s work.

Step 6: Always Document all your Observations

Whatever you observe, ensure it goes straight to your employees’ file or performance chart. This will keep you on top of all the performance

evaluation. It would also help you in ensuring all the issues and weaknesses of your employees are immediately tackled. This would also be helpful for the end of the year evaluation as you would already have all the performance reports and won't be overburdened.

There are many leaders or managers who fail to monitor their employee performance and realize a little too late that there have been performance issues when a major problem arises. This means you would have to put in double the effort, resources and time to figure out where the problem lies, what was the cause and how to handle it. However, when you are on top of monitoring the performance of your employees, you would be able to tackle any potential problem instantly and can maintain the quality of care in your private practice.

Examining the Marketing Progress

When it comes to monitoring performance, it is important that you monitor the progress of your marketing efforts as well. This will ensure that your resources and time are invested in the right strategy and technique. Following are some of the steps you should follow to determine whether your marketing efforts are working or need to be altered:

Step 1: Planning the Campaign and How to Monitor Progress

This is a simple step. When you plan your entire marketing campaign, you need to make sure that you also determine the ways in which you would track its progress. Ensure that the campaign is well thought out and can effectively deliver your message. Moreover, you need to realize that constant monitoring of all the campaigns is essential to achieve optimal results.

Step 2: Defining Channels to Track

The easiest way to monitor and track the progress of your marketing efforts is to determine which channels you want to derive traffic from. Following are some of the most common channels most of the businesses, including health care businesses, utilize:

- *Direct* – These are your potential patients who come to your private practice directly without the help of any other parties. For instance, a patient looking for an ophthalmologist sees your print advertisement and looks you up on the internet to find your website.
- *Referral* – These are your potential patients who come to your private practice or checks out your website after hearing good reviews from your

existing or past patients.

- *Organic* – These are your potential patients who come to know about your private practice through search engines like Google. For instance, they were looking for an ophthalmologist in their city and searched the web for services or products you offer and this is how they ended up on your website.
- *Emails* – These are your potential patients who find your private practice through an email campaign you initiated.
- *Paid* – These are your potential patients that find your private practice through an electronic, web or print advertisement campaign you started.
- *Social* – These are your potential patients that find your private practice while browsing through social media websites like Facebook and Instagram.
- *Other* – These are your potential patients that find your private practice through some other means or channels than the ones mentioned above.

Step 3: Defining Marketing Metrics to Measure

It is important that you measure marketing efforts. The best way of doing this is by using marketing metrics. These metrics are numerical data collection which offers a certain perspective on your marketing campaign to determine if you are meeting the marketing goals you had created for your private practice. There are numerous ways to generate this data to form metrics. Following are some useful and effective ways:

- *Web Content* – This helps you determine the effectiveness of your website and blog. It indicates whether the quality of content is successfully working or not in encouraging people to take certain actions.
- *Lead Conversion* – This is the data collected on potential patients and individuals who connect with you or your private practice through your marketing efforts. This means the initial contact they make and when they come to get a service or treatment done from you. This metric will help in tracking where you might have lost your potential patients and help in developing strategies to improve the lead process.
- *Individual Visitors* – This tracks the data from when a user visits your private practice website for the first time and the number of times they return. This lets you monitor the effectiveness of each stage of your

marketing plan.

- *Click-Through Rate* – This would be a web page on your website which has a call to action that the user must perform in order for you to collect information. It would help measure various things including the number of individuals visiting your website as well as how many followed the actionable step.
- *Bounce Rate* – This is the data on the number of users that come to one of your web pages but leave without taking any action or visiting any other pages.
- *Referrals from Search Engine* – Search engines like Google have numerous ways of tracking down the keywords which individuals use to land on your website and which search engine helped in directing those people to you.
- *Effectiveness of Social Media* – You can utilize different actions in social media websites to measure the effectiveness of your marketing efforts, for instance, likes on your Facebook posts, comments on your Instagram posts and mentions in your Twitter updates. There are of course other means of tracking the social media websites which are inbuilt on those sites to track the traffic.
- *Word of Mouth* – This is one of the most effective lead generation methods in which one of your satisfied patients recommends your private clinic to someone they know is looking for the same services or treatments. This can be done through follow-up surveys to indicate how many of your patients are satisfied with your services and willing to recommend or refer your clinic to others. We found that word of mouth publicity is one of the best publicity for doctors.

There are numerous other metrics that can help you in measuring the success of your marketing efforts.

Step 4: Evaluating the Campaign

When you are done with defining your channels and marketing metrics, you can easily keep track of your entire marketing campaign. Here is how you can do it:

- *Search Marketing Performance* – Google Analytics is one of the most effective means of measuring your traffic, along with other crucial data related to your website. Aside from that, you would also need to utilize

other functions to accurately measure the data. The first one is SEO position – site ranking is important in ensuring that your website appears among the top search results and therefore, SEO ranking is very important. The second is Pay Per Click Ads – the best way to do this is through Dynamic Number Insertion, which is a code embedded in your web-page which keeps tracking the conversions.

- *Social Media Marketing* – Each social media website has a built-in analytics system that you can utilize to monitor the effectiveness of your posts and campaign.
- *Print, Electronic and Other Campaigns* – This can be determined through surveys and feedback in which you can ask your patients how they heard from you.

These are the ways in which you can measure and monitor the marketing campaign of your private practice. This will enable you to make any relevant changes that are needed to enhance or improve your campaign. Moreover, if you are not getting good results, it would also indicate that you need to change your marketing strategies since the existing ones are not working for you.

It is highly recommended that you consult a professional to help you with your marketing campaign if you are unsure how to effectively create one. It is important to keep in mind that marketing your private practice, especially online, is integral if you want your private practice to grow and prosper. In today's digitized world, having a website and a strong web presence is crucial for every business, as you have already learned previously in this book. This is the reason why you can't possibly ignore or neglect establishing an online presence for your private practice.

Change Management

Change is, indeed, constant in all businesses in order to stay competitive and profitable today. It is inevitable that you would be making changes in your strategies as you make progress and grow your private practice. These changes can be because you identified better and improved technologies or processes that can enhance the working of your private practice or these changes can be due to the low results you have received from the marketing campaign or financial analysis of the business.

No matter what the reason for the change is, it is essential for you to

implement it using the right process. Making changes that affect the entire private practice cannot be done without proper planning. It is important to have a strategy in place that can help you in smoothly making the changes successfully within your private practice. Following are the steps that can help you in effective change management:

1. Highlight the Change

The first step you need to take for effective change management is clearly highlighting the change that needs to be made and why. You need to first determine why this change is needed and what would be its outcome. Properly understanding and determining what needs to be changed and why can help you in creating a strong foundation for successfully implementing the change within your private practice.

2. Determine how the Change will Benefit your Practice

Just as you determine the change and why it is needed, you also must highlight all the positive changes that it can bring to your practice and your employees. Note down all the benefits it would bring, especially how it is going to benefit your patients since they are the most important part of your private practice. Ask yourself, is this change going to improve the quality of treatment being provided to the patients? Is this change going to enhance the processes of your private practice and is it going to increase the level of productivity throughout your private practice? This will help in understanding the change better and also make it easier for you to help your employees understand it.

3. Establish a Road-map

Next, you need to create a plan to implement that change. Determine what are the necessary things required to make that change happen. With the right and clear road-map, it would become easier and simpler to implement the changes without creating any further problems and ensuring that the workings of your private practice don’t get negatively affected by the implementation of the change.

In order to create the right road-map, it must include your objectives and goals for the change, the resources that would be required to successfully implement the change as well as the required budget to implement that change. After highlighting all of these, you then need to start creating steps and goals for your change. Ensure that bigger goals are divided into easy and

manageable short terms goals. Aside from this, you would also need to establish ways of monitoring and measuring the progress so that you can analyze the rate of success.

Ensure that the road-map you create is clear and easy to understand so that the entire team and your employees can properly understand it and follow it. You also need to include it with the tasks and responsibilities of all or specific employees that are needed to smoothly implement this change.

4. Collect Data to Evaluate

When you start implementing the change, you would also need to continuously monitor and evaluate the progress for which you would need to gather all the data. While some changes would be easy and simple to measure, there would be others that might be difficult. However, clearly documenting everything can help in measuring the success of your changed management plan. It will also help you determine if there are any issues or hurdles that need to be taken care of during the implementation process.

5. Communicate the Change to your Employees

The most important part of any change management is preparing the employees to accept and follow that change. This of course is dependent on how well you communicate the change or changes that are about to happen to your employees. Change resistance is real and it can negatively affect the change you want to implement. If you neglect to keep your employees in the loop or fail to effectively communicate the changes to them to help them prepare, it can result in negative consequences.

It is essential to address the concerns and queries of your employees regarding the changes that are about to happen. When you offer open and clear communication and interaction throughout the course of change implementation and transition to your employees, it helps them in venting out their frustrations, showing their concerns, asking questions and even offering suggestions. All of this helps in preparing them for the change and also assists in making a smoother transition.

6. Manage and Monitor Risks

Even after offering a clear communication process to your employees, it can still result in a certain amount of change resistance. Such resistance typically occurs because your employees fear the unknown. Even when you properly

explain the entire process and the reasoning behind the change, if some of your employees are still resisting, then you need to determine why. It could be possible that they haven't fully understood the process and reasons.

Whatever the cause is, you need to manage it smoothly and immediately before it starts threatening the success of your change. Moreover, there can be other potential risks and problems that might come with implementing changes. Therefore, it is important that you evaluate and monitor all the potential risks associated with the change that you are implementing.

7. Celebrate Successful Implementation

Once the change is implemented, be sure to celebrate it. Take some time out to recognize the key players among your employees who made efforts to make this change possible. Celebrate with all employees to make them part of that change. This would not only highlight the crucial step towards progress that your private practice has made, but it would also encourage and motivate your employees to positively accept and adapt to the change. This is one of the best ways of encouraging positive adaption of the change and ensuring the success of your change management.

8. Regularly Monitor and Review the Process

You need to keep in mind that change management is an ongoing process. After the successful implementation of the change, your work isn't done. You need to keep monitoring and reviewing the change to ensure that it is a positive one and that it is benefiting your overall private practice. You need to take feedback from your employees, evaluate the steps, identify potential risks, obstacles and challenges and modify or readjust your plan and strategies accordingly.

Even when you are rather careful with the entire process, setbacks and challenges are bound to occur. This can create hurdles, delay progress and also cause confusion among the employees. However, if you have followed these steps, it would be easier for you to identify what and where the problem is and create a plan to tackle that problem. This will ensure that your change initiative is smooth and successful.

Take-Home Message

➢ As the owner of your private practice, it would be your responsibility to monitor the performances of all your employees.

➢ With proper and continuous interaction with employees, you would be able to determine their productivity levels and how they are contributing to your private practice.

➢ When it comes to monitoring performance, it is important that you monitor the progress of your marketing efforts as well.

➢ When you plan your entire marketing campaign, you need to make sure that you also determine the ways in which you would track its progress.

➢ When you are done with defining your channels and marketing metrics, you can easily keep track of your entire marketing campaign.

➢ Making changes that affect the entire private practice cannot be done without proper planning.

➢ With the right and clear roadmap, it would become easier and simpler to implement the changes without creating any further problems

➢ The most important part of any change management is preparing the employees to accept and follow that change.

➢ Change resistance is real and it can negatively affect the change you want to implement.

➢ It is important that you evaluate and monitor all the potential risks associated with the change that you are implementing.

➢ Once the change is implemented, be sure to celebrate it.

➢ Keep monitoring and reviewing the change to ensure that it is a positive one and that it is benefiting your overall private practice.

Chapter 33
How to Become a Productive Doctor and Run Medical Practice Efficiently?

"I start with the premise that the function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers."

- Ralph Nader

Running your medical practice in an efficient way will lead to increased office morale and higher profitability. Set the expectation of efficiency with all the team members by having an established routine. This will allow everyone to benefit from a less stressful but highly productive environment. With a more structured and organized work environment, a cycle of productivity will follow, creating an office with happy staff and satisfied patients.

How to become a Productive Doctor?

1. Learn to Delegate

Whether in a clinical or administrative role, health professionals may at one point or another encounter situations in which they will find it necessary to assign certain tasks to other members of the medical team with the appropriate qualifications, knowledge and skills.

2. Set Deadlines and Keep Them

Researchers have shown that people who have self-control issues often fail when imposing self-deadlines. Instead, it's best to evenly space deadlines and have an outside party help you enforce them. This help may come from a nurse, physician assistant or office manager—somebody who is aware of your responsibilities and works closely with you. For instance, an office manager can help you set deadlines to complete medical dictations.

3. Minimize the use of Smartphones and Social Media in the Clinic

The average doctor/medical professional spends a whopping 5 hours a day on mobile devices, with half this time spent on social media. If you have a busy day, it's a good idea to store your smartphone in a secure yet accessible

location. Doing so will definitely increase your productivity. We live in a connected world and many of us spend late nights tapping away at our EHRs. We all know we are just a few clicks away from the latest funny video on YouTube or the latest political news on Facebook. With the average attention span for adults being 20 minutes, having a timer by my side keeps me on track. If you are really having trouble getting rid of internet distractions, there are apps such as Rescue Time that will disable you from browsing the most common social media sites.

4. The Pomodoro Technique

The Pomodoro Technique was developed by Francesco Cirillo in the 1990s and is named after the tomato-shaped timer that he used to track his work while at the university. This method involves breaking larger tasks into short, timed intervals called "pomodoros." These pomodoros are typically 25 minutes in length and punctuated by short breaks of 5 minutes. Importantly, the breaks enhance your motivation and keep you going.

Proponents claim that this approach trains the brain to focus in short periods and stay on top of deadlines or tasks that recur frequently. For instance, if you're behind on your charts—which seem to flow incessantly—try the Pomodoro Technique! If interested in employing this technique, apps are available for your smartphone or desktop.

5. The 2-minute Rule

Do you ever find yourself postponing small tasks that are not difficult at all, like making a phone call to a patient? Well, then the 2-minute rule may help. If a task takes less than 2 minutes to complete, do it now, according to David Allen's bestselling book Getting Things Done. The 2-minute rule is designed to make it easier to get started on the things you should be doing.

6. Declutter and Detox

Decluttering your workspace can help you focus better. According to organization guru, Marie Kondo, try to keep everything in its own place, get rid of excess papers that can be accessed online and try to store things vertically for better visibility.

7. Select the Best Environment

Different people work best in different environments, but all people work well in environments with minimal distraction. If you plan to spend Sunday catching up with journal articles, don't do it while watching television or playing with the kids. Instead, retire to the solitude of your home office or a

local library to be productive.

As you can see, none of these methods for boosting productivity are particularly difficult. But, they do require commitment. Following any of these tips—or even a few of them—may help improve not only your productivity, but your quality of life, practice revenue and patient satisfaction as well.

8. Switching tasks

It's no fun doing one task for too long. Switching tasks can add variety to your routine. For instance, instead of doing most of your yearly Continuing Medical Education (CME) requirements in one marathon weekend, try breaking up these requirements by doing a little every few weeks throughout the year.

9. Prioritize

Just as with your differential diagnosis and treatment plans, it's best to prioritize your responsibilities. For instance, filling out patient charts should be prioritized over ensuring the supply closet is fully stocked.

10. Avoid Multitasking

Multitasking is pernicious because it splits your focus while giving you a false sense of accomplishment and ultimately, results in undue stress. Instead of concentrating on many things at once, try monotasking. Consider, for instance, spending time with one patient at a time instead of constantly scurrying between examination rooms and seeing several patients at once.

11. Advance Planning

After setting goals and prioritizing tasks, spend time planning your workload over longer periods of time. Planning for a single day is reactionary, with attention quickly gobbled up by urgent activities. Instead, experiment with weekly or monthly planning to achieve long-term goals. For instance, if you're writing a review article, submitting a grant or developing new curricula, planning over the long haul can help you get things done.

12. Small Changes Now can Lead to Big Transformations Later

Some of the readers may be familiar with the word "Kaizen" which is the Japanese word for "continual improvement" and is often used in business. It is the idea that small incremental changes to enhance efficiency can ultimately have great long-term effects. Are there any things in your practice that you can improve?

How to Increase the Productivity of Your Medical Practice?

We all want our medical offices to run as efficiently and smoothly as possible. Unfortunately, there are some days that fall short from the very beginning and eventually fall apart completely. These are the days that even heavy doses of caffeine and the most motivating Muzak can't fix. Managing your medical office efficiently maximizes productivity and creates more profitability. When your practice is truly productive, you can see fewer patients while retaining a strong bottom line. Luckily, if you feel your practice isn't running effectively, there are some simple steps you can take to get things back on track. Here are a few strategies and daily habits that can reduce the stresses created by an unproductive office.

1. Welcome New Technology

Technology is one of the greatest tools for efficient medical practice. It can eliminate errors, improve patient access and save time. Technology now systematizes many time-consuming tasks such as appointment reminders, newsletters, follow-up care and more. However, for this to work effectively, it is critical that everyone is fully trained and mentally on board. If not used to its full advantage, technology can actually hinder productivity and slow things down.

2. Use an Online Scheduling Tool

Speaking of technology, now is the time to look into an online scheduling tool. It takes about 10 minutes to schedule appointments. That time adds up quickly and most offices spend way too much valuable time scheduling appointments. Utilizing an online digital scheduling tool, where patients can schedule their own appointments, will help cut back significantly on wasted time scheduling and rescheduling appointments. Use your automated newsletters as well as in-office communication to educate patients about the option to book online.

3. Investigate your Process

Look into your processes and choose just one you would like to streamline. You will be more motivated to attack a problem area if you apply your focus to one small portion or practice technique and go from there. Looking at your all issues and trying to attack something major will leave you feeling overwhelmed and in the end, you may accomplish nothing at all.

4. Plan Ahead

Knowing what's coming is the key to office productivity. Look ahead at your schedule and figure out what patient information will be required and what holes need to be filled before the day has really begun. This is critical to maintaining the highest level of practice efficiency and profitability. At the end of your day, take a little bit of time to review what tomorrow holds. Evaluate and rank procedures and communications by priority. You can then determine and designate deadlines and assign tasks beforehand, which will help you and your staff. Follow your list and try to not get distracted by less important work.

5. Provide a Comfortable Reception Area

Sometimes, even using all of these tricks may not be enough to keep waiting times down. At the very least, make sure your waiting room provides a pleasant space for your patients. Stocking it with magazines and comfy seating, providing complimentary coffee and tea and offering free WiFi or TV entertainment can go a long way in optimizing patient satisfaction even when the wait time isn't ideal.

6. Take Regular Feedback and Fix the Bottleneck

Regular feedback from staff members is very important. In summary, remember that you are your most important asset. You can think of yourself as a small company – You, Inc, which you need to nurture. It's no longer enough to just become a doctor and work hard anymore. You must do something you love, have outside interests, participate in your community and continue learning throughout your life. These are investments in your future, which help you lead a life full of purpose and meaning. Unfortunately, too many doctors (especially those with successful careers) have forgotten that there is more to life than just generating revenues. Finding a second source of income, which comes from something you love to do, will make life much more interesting – after all, medicine can become very monotonous if you don't explore new options. As you get senior, it's the quality of your patients which counts.

Finding a mentor who can give you the benefit of his experience can also help you achieve your goals. This is why every athlete has a coach – to drive them, to make suggestions, to help encourage them to do their best. Coaches know exactly how to get their "stars" to work a little harder, to stretch their horizons, to try things that they ordinarily wouldn't have tried if they were left on their own. Many doctors hate the business side of the practice, but that

is exactly where profits are made or lost! So, what's a doctor to do? Simple - put a knowledgeable coach on your success team and maybe you'll win the Olympics of success in practice! How do you find such a coach? If you have a friend or relative who is a successful businessman, ask him for help. Many successful people are very happy to share their secrets of success with others. Another useful source is your patients. Pick your most successful patient and ask for help. Most patients are more than happy to help their doctors!

In his book, *Finding Your Niche*, Laurence Pino suggests trying this exercise. *"Visualize your own funeral. There will be four speakers at the service: a family member, a friend, a colleague, and an associate from your community. What would you like these speakers to say about you and your life?"* This might seem a morbid thought to some, but it's worth considering Pino's point. What exactly is it that you hope to accomplish in your lifetime? You then need to plan your life so that you can achieve these goals. Planning backward works much better than stepping forward into the unknown. If you plan well, you can lead a life that you can look back upon with pride and joy.

Take Home Message:

➢ Increase productivity by delegating well and minimizing digital distractions.

➢ Manage your time by using tried and tested techniques such as the pomodoro method.

➢ Focus on one task at a time and take short breaks to prevent a burnout.

➢ Plan ahead by creating a priority list and setting deadlines.

➢ Use advanced medical tools and administration software to streamline paperwork and overall operations.

➢ Accept and adjust your plans according to feedback and complaints.

Chapter 34
How to Create a Powerful Brand as a Doctor and for Your Medical Practice?

"Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life."

-Steve Jobs

Every successful business, including the medical practice, benefits from having a strong brand image (Figure 34.1). The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines a brand as a name, term, sign, symbol or design or a group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of other sellers. A brand is a particular identity or image that's regarded as useful or valuable. And a brand's identity is how a business wants to be perceived by its customers or audience. A brand consists of many factors — the person or company's name (think McDonald's), its logo, a person's website colors and font, overall reputation and even style. When we think of a brand, we usually think of companies such as Apple, Pepsi or Coca-Cola with their recognizable logos and colors. We may also think about pop singer celebrities, such as Michael Jackson and Elvis Presley, who all have large-scale exposure and garner massive attention.

Figure 34.1: Logos of some of the best-known brands in health care

If you're a medical student, a resident or a consultant— you can't create a brand, can you? Yes, you can! But how? Your brand is how you uniquely and intentionally present yourself to your audience, whoever that may be at various stages in your medical career.

As a premedical student applying to medical school, the most successful candidates figure out their brand and "sell it" to the admissions committee: that of a hard-working, dedicated, well-rounded student who will make a competent doctor. They do so by volunteering, taking on leadership positions, earning consistently high grades — basically, creating the brand of the ideal candidate that admission offices are looking for and presenting that in a clear, succinct way.

The same applies to a medical student looking to become a resident, a resident physician looking for his or her first job or the consultant doctor starting a new practice … you are a brand. Whether you work to refine that brand is up to you.

Most of the choices we make as customers are based on effective branding. In most cases, we tend to go with brands we can relate to or associate with quality. Developing a brand is a critical component of your marketing strategy. A brand defines the core values of a business and promises a unique experience for the customers who connect to that brand.

When you hear the word "branding," your first thought may be a logo or an advertisement. However, branding is much more than that. Your brand defines your business as a whole. Branding is the association that is attached to a business and its customers. The ultimate goal behind every branding exercise is to get potential customers to know, like and trust your business so that when the need for your product arises, they think of your business first.

Your medical practice is a business too and in order to grow, it needs branding. In fact, if you do not focus on building a unique brand, your patients will create it for you and it may not be the way you wanted it to be. For your medical practice, the brand is something your patients feel, hear or see when they visit your office, interact with you or deal with your staff. It includes your office décor and the usability of your website. It also includes the promotional material you provide to patients, such as brochures, leaflets, etc.

Why is Branding Important for your Medical Practice?

Simply because your brand is your reputation. All businesses benefit from great branding, but it is more critical in health care. Why? Because the decisions we make concerning our health are the most significant. You will buy a couple of tacos from a vendor you hardly know, but cardiac surgery? No. You must trust your health care providers, whether you know them or not.

In this always-plugged-in era, if you need a reputation for your practice, then you need branding too. Why? Because like other businesses, doctors are providing a service too. When a patient hears your name, what do you hope he or she says about your practice? Branding will not only differentiate your practice from your competitors but will also instill trust and confidence in your patients. Active branding is necessary to ensure your medical practice is perceived well by your patients.

However, branding does not stop at establishing an identity. Ensuring consistency throughout all correspondence will increase brand awareness and eventually brand recognition. When patients see such consistency, their confidence and trust in your practice and services will begin to grow. Your practice will become more personable, which will result in happy and loyal patients who will want to come back to your practice.

Establishing a brand will help propel you forward with the same uniqueness you handle your patients.

How do you Brand your Medical Practice?

When you think of branding, you probably imagine a business logo, vision and mission statements and promotional material. While these items should be a part of your overall branding strategy, they are not the only elements you should focus on if you want to create an effective brand for your practice. Instead, you must ask yourself, “What sets my practice apart from other medical facilities? Do I have any specialty?
Do I use any specific treatment techniques that result in higher success rates than others?” These things can set you apart from other physicians. You must find ways to incorporate a unique value proposition (USP) as this will strengthen your brand identity.

How to Create a Branding Strategy for your Medical Practice?

- **Identify your USP:** To be successful in today’s competitive landscape, you must give patients a unique reason to choose you over your

competition. Identifying your USP is one of the most crucial factors in branding your medical practice. Your USP gives you an edge and sets you apart from your competitors. You should take a step back and analyze what positive attributes you have within your practice that are working in your favor. Now, think of ways you can promote these attributes into the consciousness of your patients.

- **Define your Target Audience:** The demographics of your target audience can help you create an effective branding strategy that will catch the attention of prospects within that demographic. You may need to research in order to understand what factors drive patients to select a medical practice over its competitors in your area. Once you have your target audience identified, direct your branding efforts toward addressing their pain points.
- **Create Visual Branding Elements:** Visual marketing elements such as a logo and tagline are an important part of your branding strategy. These visual elements must convey the same feeling that you want patients to experience when they come into your office. For beginners, your practice should have a logo that you can use on your website, business cards, brochures and any other promotional materials.
- **Use SEO to Drive Traffic to your Website:** Your branding strategy will not be able to work its magic unless potential and existing patients can find you online. Including relevant keywords in the website content is one of the best ways to ensure your brand remains on the top of search engine results. You can use keywords or phrases directly on your web pages or your blog.
- **Build a Strong Online Presence:** Your branding strategy depends on your ability to create a solid online presence across all media. You must utilize a consistent tone of voice and carefully selected text to portray your medical practice in the best light. Your message should represent your practice as a reliable and dependable medical facility that provides a positive experience for every phase of the patient’s journey. You can leverage social media platforms to interact with your patients and portray your practice as an industry leader.
- **Communicate your USP to Patients:** Now it is time to deliver your message and USP to your target audience. This process involves intricately weaving your USP with text and visuals throughout your online and traditional marketing campaigns. Now take a step back, look at your

practice website and ask yourself, “Does this convey what I want it to?” If the answer is no, it is time to go back to the storyboard.

- **Position your Brand as an Industry Leader:** Strong branding helps raise your practice above the competition by highlighting your USP. With time, current and potential patients will gravitate toward your practice’s presence upon encountering advertisements from your team. You should continue maintaining your website and social media accounts to help your practice attract new patients and retain existing ones.
- **Monitor Patient Experience:** All of the elements stated above tie into the patient experience. You might be doing your best to foster your brand, but your brand image ultimately depends on how your patients feel and how they perceive your practice. If you are failing to give them the experience they expect, you are downgrading your brand. Instead of guessing or assuming what your patients want, just ask them. You can request them to fill out a patient satisfaction survey after the appointment and monitor online reviews on sites like Google. Online reviews and patient surveys will give you a better idea of what patients want and whether you are on the right track.

Delivery of Services:

Once you have successfully positioned your brand, you will need to deliver on your promises every single day and not just in your promotional messages. Remember, your brand is an aggregate of what your patients experience with your practice, which is larger than your mission or vision statements. To put it differently, you can only position your practice, but your brand is essentially an emotional response you are working to establish.

When looking to build your brand, you have to make sure that every element of your branding strategy is closely tied up – the way your phone is answered, appointment times, waiting room décor, bedside manners of your staff, technology, location, parking, treatments that you promote and much more. If you aim to be the “leading health care provider in town,” you cannot afford to have substandard facilities and long waiting hours. It is possible to create the brand you want for your practice, but only if you remain consistent in your efforts. It is going to require hard work and dedication, but the result will be in the form of an established brand that your patients have confidence in.

Your brand is a unique entity that makes an unspoken promise about the

quality of care that can be expected from your practice. You will be able to create a strong brand when you choose to promote a facility or feature that makes you different from others. So, call your team and embrace the creative ways your employees can come together to nurture your brand. Keep the quality consistent and patients will happily spread kind words about your brand.

Take-Home Message:

➢ The secrets of my successful medical practice as well as branding, include a smile. Many doctors walk around with a frown.

➢ Be consistent. Return every phone call in a timely fashion.

➢ View everyone as a potential patient. Communicate your USPs to the patient.

➢ Monitor patient experience.

Chapter 35
How to Deal with Professional Envy during the Medical Career?

"Success makes so many people hate you. I wish it wasn't that way. It would be wonderful to enjoy success without seeing envy in the eyes of those around you."

- Marilyn Monroe

Medical professionals, all over the world, are exposed to competition from their early years. Medical students deal with Jealousy, Envy and Disgust because of the competitive nature of this profession. Among all the variables influencing a medical student's health and well-being, competition holds the utmost importance.

Competition within the society was first discussed by Charles Darwin when he introduced the phrase 'survival of the fittest'. He observed that living in the same environment and sharing the same resources leads to conflicts. Living organisms (including humans) become hostile when the resources are scarce.

These days, resources have turned into rewards (i.e. good grades, qualifications, salary, and promotions). We live in a world where these merits become an indicator of personal and professional success.

Envy and jealousy are negative feelings. They develop when one does not like another person's achievement or may want what they possess. These feelings emerge due to a superiority complex, ego issues, or some deep-rooted insecurity. Envy has always been present, in literature, historical texts, cultures, and even amidst colleagues. One can find it in almost all professions, even more frequently amongst surgeons.

In an article on Professional Envy Among Doctors the author wrote, "Envy may be classified in surgical envy, hierarchical envy and patient-related envy. Professional envy in doctors makes socializing and interrelating difficult, as the peers are always seen as competitors and socializing with them is

competition and not a collective effort directed to help the patient and to do good. The remedy for professional envy is self-discipline and devotion to the profession and to the patient, the pursuance of a higher life ideal, the awareness that the doctor practices a noble science to the benefit of the patient, and not to one's personal interest (Figure 35.1)."

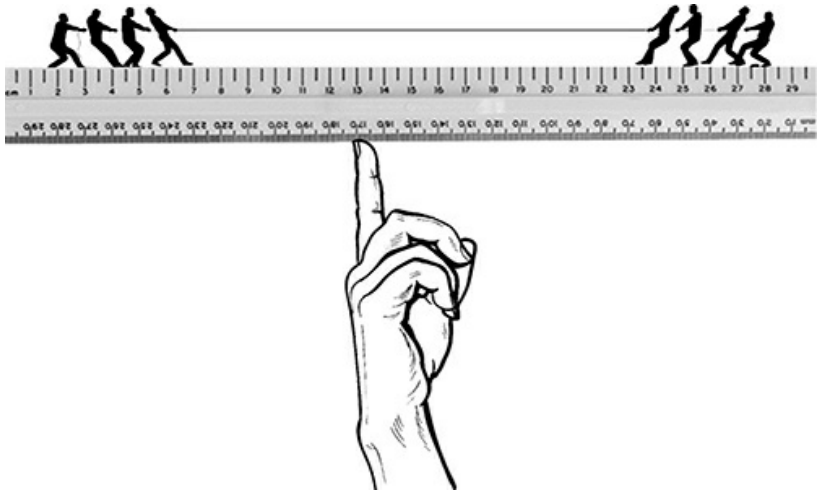


Figure 35. 1. Medical professionals often witness envy, jealousy, and competition in hospitals and the workplace.

Envy and the Medical Profession:

The article points out that doctors become envious at an early age. Starting from medical school, their education revolves around the 'principle of competitiveness and not honest collaboration.'

Everything from report cards, positive feedback from teachers, to praise from friends, turns one medical student against the other. These students are raised to believe in the hierarchy of the medical field. They understand that the only way to get to the top is to make the society believe that you are the best. If someone else receives more praise, then they are rivals not friends. The perception unintentionally promotes feelings of animosity amongst classmates and professional colleagues.

With time, these envious thoughts intensify, devolving into degrading levels and instigating conflicts.

Furthermore, professional envy exists in surgical specialties (Neurosurgery, general surgery, Ophthalmology, Orthopedics, cardiovascular surgery, Urology, etc). These fields give surgeons more exposure to social and professional comparison. Hence, turning their professional settings into a battleground for praises, community approval, and revenues.

The Surgeon and Professional Envy:

A surgeon's role in the community and high responsibilities also contribute to envious thoughts. During specialized training and throughout medical practice, a surgeon has to develop a strong sense of self-awareness. Individual performance is dependant on personal development and capacity. With time, if self-confidence transforms into professional pride, the individual becomes conceited and more egoistic.

Many times these notions hinder judgement as one believes to have superiority over colleagues and patients. Such behavior often harms their medical career rather than uplift it.

Types of Professional Envy

In most cases, envious thoughts emerge when a person received harsh criticism or negative feedback. Depending on the relevance of this information to their sense of self, they might become bitter. The negative feelings grow if their colleague or any person with a similar background has received more compliments or better feedback. Collectively these factors serve as a reason for this person to become envious of the other.

We can classify professional envy amongst surgeons into three types:

Surgical Envy

It occurs when your peers (typically those who practice the same surgical speciality) perform better than you. Their achievements might make you insecure and doubtful about your capabilities. You might even perceive them as a threat to your reputation.

If not restrained, these feelings develop into animosity and hatred. Making it difficult for you to develop healthy social ties within the medical community.

Hierarchical Envy

Having a hierarchical system in the clinic can often create tension between colleagues. The jealousy may arise when a peer outranks you or get promoted. The changing ranks give some professionals an upper hand over others. Likewise, the subordinated delude themselves into thinking that the promotion was unjust or biased.

As a result, you might start discrediting their achievements, overlooking positive qualities, and finding ways to badmouth them in public.

Patient-Associated Envy

You might get jealous of surgeons that have more patients or acquire more referrals.

In all three situations, comparison leads to envy. Your lack of achievements make you feel insecure, self-pity, depressed, frustrated, and angry. It would help if you learned how to control these negative emotions. Otherwise, you act out of spite, often harming your professional relationships.

How to Treat Professional Envy?

The healthcare industry is a competitive sector. You are bound to become frustrated and enraged when things don't go your way. Or when someone else succeeds.

Remember that envy does not cause professional conflict but the way you express or respond to those emotions does.

A good cure for professional envy and jealousy is

> *"self-discipline and having high ideals in life, to the extent that sordid commercial instincts may be defeated, cultivating a noble science and practicing medical art for the benefit of the others, which are the best reward in themselves"*.

Self-evaluate and reframe your mindset whenever such a situation occurs. Shifting your energy and efforts towards something positive can prevent things from escalating. It also gives you a clearer and better perception of your professional growth.

Lastly, strive for professional development and set targets based on personal performance. These steps will prevent you from pitting yourself with others and becoming insecure about your position.

How to Deal with Envious Co-worker?

Empathize

When you notice signs of jealousy from a colleague, try to perceive yourself from their perspective. This mindset will help you identify the source of their envy. Common reasons include promotion, over-friendly relationship with supervisors that make your co-worker feel threatened, or maybe they think you are too uptight and snobbish.

Once you find the reason, try to analyze your workplace dynamics and behavior. Take steps to turn them into your friend rather than a foe. You should also prepare yourself for a confrontation if the envious co-worker

becomes hostile.

Brush It Off

Don’t let an envious colleague dampen your success or make you insecure. Your achievements are a result of hard work and dedication. You should focus on continuing the good work instead of stressing over what others think.

However,if your behavior has triggered the jealousy, you should make amends. As explained earlier, try to cultivate a healthier workplace relationships by changing your attitude and demeanor.

Talk Things Through

If your envious co-workers behavior unsettles you, approach them politely. Tell them how you noticed a change in the way they interact with you and request an explanation.

If they remark on something you have done or said, apologize for the unintentional mistake. If they are jealous about a promotion, empathize with them. Motivate them to give their best for the next appraisal and ask them if they need help. Being humble about your achievements leaves a more positive impression.

Collect Evidence

Many times jealousy can give rise to office politics and sabotage. Your co-worker can try to ruin your reputation by spreading rumors, misinforming you about a case, or messing up your reports.

If that happens, you must inform a supervisor or HR manager. Collect evidence against them by noting the date and time of each offence. Also, collect additional proof to support your case.

Don’t Retaliate

As the saying goes, ‘an eye for an eye, turns the whole world blind.’

Never stoop to your jealous coworker’s level. You don’t have to badmouth them or harm them in any way. Your ethical conduct and professionalism will allow you to keep your reputation intact.

Let the HR team do what they have to while you focus on your work.

Take-Home Message

➢ Professional envy is relatively common in the medical field. It arises due to the competitive environment in medical school where grades and

recommendation from supervisors mean everything.

➢ Envy has many forms. Surgical envy occurs when you feel threatened by a co-worker/rival surgeon. Hierarchical envy happens when another surgeon receives a bonus, certificate or promotion before you. Patient-associated envy might occur when private practices tally their patient rates and conversions. The more referrals and new patients one party gains, the more envious the other feels.

➢ The best way to deal with an envious coworker is by talking things through. If their feelings remain unchanged set boundaries to prevent getting hurt. You should also collect proof and report misbehavior against you if a jealous coworker creates trouble. Use this evidence to file a complaint with HR.

➢ Focus all your energy on your work and never compare each other. Do not let jealousy disrupt your life.

Chapter 36
Internal Theft and Pilferage in Medical Practice and How to Prevent Them?

“Don’t ever let your business get ahead of the financial side of your business. Accounting, accounting, accounting. Know your numbers.”

-Tilman J. Fertitta

The medical profession might be noble, but greed and other vices can compel employees to cross boundaries. There have been many cases of internal thefts where the medical staff has committed fraud and embezzled money. Internal theft in itself comes in many various forms.

These include:

- **Employee Theft**

  When the medical staff steals from the owners.

- **Embezzlement**

  When an individual breaches trust by gaining ownership of financial assets and property rights entrusted to them. They can do this through forged papers or other illegal activities.

- **Pilferage /Defalcation**

  It means sneaking off with a small amount of money to avoid suspicion.

No matter what it’s called, internal theft causes severe problems within the medical practice. It creates conflicts and feelings of distrust amongst coworkers. There have been cases where some employees stole everything inside the clinic.

The Common Types of Theft

1. Inventory Theft

Inventory theft refers to situations where employees steal products and prescriptions from the medical practice. The stolen item is taken for personal use or stolen with the intent to gain profit by selling it at a higher price. The latter is generally the case with medical products and in-house software.

If the problem goes undetected, you can lose almost half of the inventory to these greedy employees. Preventive measures and additional security are the only way to stop recurring acts of crime. You can also deter prying eyes by placing security cameras inside and outside the premises. Also, use gates with access control. That way only authorized personnel can enter the high-security areas.

These steps can minimize risk and help you catch the culprit red-handed.

2. Data Theft

Data theft is another common type of internal theft. It is also more worrisome because security breaches can compromise doctor-patient trust. Your sensitive data, assets and reputation are put in line when this occurs.

Here are a few examples of data theft include:

- Stealing trade secrets
- Accessing/selling proprietary information
- Identity theft is done by using colleagues/patients' personal details (i.e. social security numbers, addresses, credit card information, etc.)
- Stealing and misusing client list and vendor list from the medical practice before leaving the job.

You can prevent data breaches by regulating and punishing the misuse of technology inside the premises. Do not let your staff use smartphones to record conversations or save confidential data.

Other prevention methods include:

- Using encrypted passwords and authentication protocols to limit access to sensitive information.
- Protect confidential files and data with encrypted passwords known to limited employees.
- Shred files and clear data history to ensure nobody misuses the information.

3. When Employees Steal Services

Service theft occurs when employees misuse privileges. For example, they might ask a colleague for a free checkup or give family and friends free service. You can keep an eye out for such activities by encouraging internal reporting and conducting bi-annual investigations.

4. Payroll Theft

When employees in the administration department or account department writes fraud checks or cashes other employees' checks to steal money from your practice. You can prevent this by maintaining a check and balance system. Get a third person to supervise and manage the payroll. Also, ensure that the person writing paychecks is not incharge of reconciling accounts.

5. Theft of Cash

Sometimes employees might overcharge patients, skim money by not registering a transaction or steal small amounts of cash from safes/registers.

Essential Steps to Prevent Employee Theft in Your Medical Practices

We have already discussed how employee theft occurs on different levels. That makes it difficult to detect during the initial phase. Yet, identifying the motive behind the theft and implementing counteractive measures could minimize risks.

Here are the reasons why employees steal:

- Ulterior motives such as greed, addictions, financial crisis.
- An opportunity created by mismanagement and unsupervised cash flow systems.
- Rationalization driven by poor judgment and motives.

In most cases, employees steal because they are in dire need of extra cash or require money to fund their addictions. Others might do it because they 'deserve a raise' or have noticed co-workers commit similar misdeeds. Many first-time offenders think that the medical practice will not notice the missing finances.

The million-rupees question is whether or not you can prevent employees from stealing.

Here are a few steps you can take to minimize the risks:

1. Value Your Employees

Many a time, employees steal because they feel undervalued or underpaid. You can prevent this from happening by rewarding them through annual appraisals and handing bonuses on special occasions. Other gestures like positive feedback, training opportunities, and discounts also help.

Additionally, keep an open line of communication to encourage employees to come forward if they need financial support.

That way, you can work a way around to assist them during a crisis before they cross the line.

2. Pre-Screen Applicants

Always do a detailed background check before hiring new employees. Create a triage by employing applicants with solid credentials, authentic recommendations, and no criminal record.

The simple process can save your time and money as it keeps delinquents off the staff.

3. Install Surveillance Cameras

Do your due diligence by installing security cameras inside and outside the practice. That way, you can catch wrongdoers in the act. Having a camera around can also intimidate anyone who considers employee theft.

Review surveillance footage regularly to spot and stop the unusual activity.

4. Maintain Proper Schedules

Supervise and organize a proper shift schedule to limit employee theft. You can also install workplace management software to monitor attendance and activities. That way, you will know who was designated to work in a specific area. This knowledge makes it easier to identify the wrongdoers if something happens.

You can also increase accountability by enforcing a buddy system. That means employees can not enter authorized areas or work in the hot-spots (i.e. near the cash, safes, or inventory) alone.

5. Conduct Surprise Audits

Stay on top of the operations by conducting impromptu inventory checks and financial audits. These actions can stop employees from stealing things in fear of getting caught.

You should also hire an independent financial advisor to detect anomalies in your in-house records. They can check ledgers, bank statements and reconfirm financial transactions.

6. Encourage Internal Reporting

Create a safe and honest work environment by conducting internal

investigations. You can set up anonymous hotline to encourage loyal staff members to file complaints against wrongdoers. Having a hotline will give the good employees a medium to report unusual activity without worrying about peer pressure/scrutiny.

However, if you want this to work, you must avoid breaking the confidentiality rule. Do not leak names or share information that others confided in you. Keep things professional by terminating employees based on evidence.

7. Set Strict Rules

You should maintain a proper code of conduct to inform employees that dishonest actions will lead to severe consequences. Setting proper policies deters wrongdoers. It also protects your business from a defamation or wrongful termination claim made by an employee you may fire because of their unlawful conduct.

Take-Home Message

➢ Employee theft is common in medical practices. It takes place in the form of embezzlement, inventory theft, pilfering, fraud, etc.

➢ Employees can steal money, misuse patient information, steal in-house software, steal medicines/equipment, forge checks or profit from sharing trade secrets with competitors.

➢ Prevent employee theft by setting strict rules and hiring third-parties to identify unusual activities.

➢ Increase surveillance and authorization-only entries in high-risk areas.

➢ Pre-screen applicants to filter out criminals.

➢ Reward and value employees to cultivate a sense of loyalty with the organization.

Part V

White Coat Diary: Recollections of a Doctor Couple from Their Professional Journey at AIIMS, New Delhi and PGIMER, Chandigarh

Chapter 37
Ember in Dusk: My Journey to Becoming a Doctorpreneur

"My journey started in a village, Mohna (near Chittorgarh in Rajasthan) where I was born and spent my childhood studying with a lantern as there was no electricity. My family had migrated from Ballia, UP to Rajasthan after the 'Bagi (Rebel) Ballia' Movement in August 1943. My grandfather (late Dr. Kamta Prasad Pandey) was a freedom fighter and trained to do cataract surgeries after taking training at Kishanlal Jalan Eye Hospital, Bhiwani (Haryana) in 1937 before India got independence. While struggling in darkness in the village, I was inspired to become an eye surgeon (savior of sight) like him by watching his patients who came blind and touched his feet after regaining vision after a cataract surgery. At that time, most of the eye (cataract) surgeries were done free of cost and the patients were very much grateful to the surgeon for giving them the gift of sight. My hard work was rewarded when I was selected for admission to a Medical College in the first attempt at 17. After completing my medical education and Ophthalmology training from the prestigious, PGIMER, Chandigarh, I did advanced eye training courses in USA and Australia and returned to India in 2006 and established SuVi Eye Hospital & Lasik Laser Center in Kota (Rajasthan) to serve the motherland. I have done 90,000 successful eye surgeries and 2,000 eye surgeries were done free of cost. I want to inspire the medical students and young doctors of India to dream big and then chase that dream to make it successful. As a successful entrepreneur in the medical field, it is my passion to spread positivity and overcome challenges among medical students and young doctors to excel in their work and provide the best possible services where they are needed and valued

- Dr. Suresh K. Pandey

The Journey from Darkness to Light

I was born in a small village called Mohna, district Chittorgarh in Rajasthan. My father, Shri Kameshwar Prasad Pandey, was a school-teacher, and my mother, Smt. Maya Pandey was a housewife. My parents always motivated

me to study hard as they believed that education is one of the most powerful weapons to change people, communities, entire nations and the future of humanity. We were not financially well-off, but neither were most members of the village. My hometown did not have electricity or paved roads. It lacked the basic infrastructure we often take for granted.

Despite those difficulties, I found solace in school. I dreamt of becoming a doctor and saving lives through medical practice. I remember studying till dusk and often squinting over the dim light of a lantern to prepare for my examinations.

I completed my primary school education at my school in Mohna and secondary school education from a nearby village school in Eklingpura. I also obtained an NTSE (National Talent Search Exam) scholarship for a year in 1980. At the age of 12, I joined the Government Higher Secondary School in Rawatbhata, which was 30 km away from my village, Mohna. I completed the first year of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) from Government College, Rampura, with the first rank from Vikram University, Ujjain, MP. I had to live in a rented accommodation, surviving on whatever I could cook by myself. I kept myself motivated by reading inspiring stories of famous people, hoping to do something remarkable like them in the future.

Inspiration to become an Eye Surgeon

My grandfather (late Dr. Kamta Prasad Pandey) was my biggest inspiration to become an eye surgeon. He learned basic eye treatment and mastered cataract surgery under the supervision of
Dr. P. D. Giridhar at Kishan Lal Jalan Eye Hospital, Bhiwani, (Haryana) in 1937.

My grandfather was a freedom fighter who had migrated from Ballia (UP) to Rajasthan in 1943 after the ‘Rebel Ballia (Bagi Ballia) Movement.’

Cataract surgery was not very advanced when I was a child. Back then, patients needed thick (aphakic) glasses. Yet, that did not stop the visually-impaired patients from expressing their gratitude and showing respect to my grandfather. I remember those interactions well, and marveled at my grandfather’s ability to cure eye problems. Those moments became my inspiration and I decided to follow in his footsteps.

I was always fascinated by a doctor’s ability to make a difference in patients’ lives through medical or surgical treatment. I had my eyes set on

becoming a doctor and, specifically, an ophthalmologist.

Medical College Chronicles: How Did I Overcome Challenges during MBBS?

I had learned from the beginning:

"Success does not come and find you; you have to go out and get it."

I prepared for the MBBS entrance exam (Pre-Medical Test) with borrowed books and daily visits to the library. I might not have had many materialistic possessions during those days, but I was eager to learn. My passion for the profession kept me motivated throughout medical school. It gave me the strength to keep moving forward, despite setbacks.

I managed to get selected for the MBBS course at Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Medical College at Jabalpur, MP, in the first attempt
(at the age of 17) and that too without tuitions or coaching classes.

Studying MBBS was not easy for me as the medium of education was English and I had studied in Hindi-medium schools. I stayed at a hostel, miles away from my family.

Fortunately, I met helpful and supportive seniors who helped me understand English and medical terms during the first few months of the MBBS course. They even lent me notes and books to help me study. The process of adjusting to a completely different environment, understanding a new language and going through financial stress was hard to say the least.

In retrospect, hostel life transformed me from an introverted, shy individual to an extrovert person. I interacted with my classmates and seniors during group discussions on various medical topics. We spent hours debating on different topics. They also clarified my doubts and helped me grasp the basics of complicated scientific concepts.

I faced the toughest time of my life during the MBBS course. With only Rs. 600-800 sent by my parents every month, I had to make ends meet by sacrificing my comfort. It was no easy feat, I started learning how to cook to save lunch money. There were weeks when I only ate one meal a day to stick to a shoestring budget.

Nevertheless, these problems and financial difficulties were not bigger than my dreams. I did not let them bother or distract me from my main goal. Studies were a way for me to keep myself distracted from my worries. I

reminded myself that I was a step closer to becoming a doctor. It motivated me to shift all my energy towards my academic progress.

Unlike other college students, I stayed away from partying and classmates who wasted time loitering around. All I wanted was to turn my dream of being an ophthalmologist into a reality.

Medical Training in Three Countries: India, USA and Australia

I successfully passed MBBS with first division with the 7th rank in a class of 140 students. With the help of my seniors and sheer willpower, I secured a very good rank in the state pre-Post Graduate (Pre-PG) examination and also got selected in the PG entrance examination of PGIMER, Chandigarh. I pursued my Post Graduation in Ophthalmology from the prestigious Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh. After completing PG in Ophthalmology in December 1997, I was selected for an advanced training in USA, where I worked as a Fellow and later as an Instructor at the John A. Moran Eye Center, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA and Sydney Eye Hospital and Save Sight Institute, Sydney, Australia for five and two years respectively.

Journey to Medical Entrepreneurship in India

My wife (Dr Vidushi Sharma, MD, FRCS, UK) and I returned to India in December 2005. We used all our savings to open the SuVi Eye Hospital & Lasik Laser Center in Kota on February 6, 2006.

Our goodwill and professionalism garnered interest amongst the general public. Within three years, we were expanding the hospital to welcome more patients. I remember treating only 8 to 10 patients per day when we started all those years ago.

At present, we see at least 250 patients every day and perform 8 to 10 laser, major or minor eye surgeries per day. So far, I have done more than 100,000 successful cataract surgeries with a very high success rate and about 2,000 free eye surgeries for underprivileged patients.

Our hard work paid off and now SuVi Eye Hospital, Kota has world-class eye surgery facilities, including Rajasthan’s first DORC Eva Phacovitrectomy machine for vitreoretinal surgery, Zepto-nano pulse technology for refractive cataract surgery. We also have several other advanced diagnostic and surgical equipment to treat all routine and complex

eye ailments.

Most of the credit goes to my late father-in-law, Group Capt. K.M. Sharma. He was the force and inspiration behind this vision. He encouraged me to return to India and supported our efforts to establish a hospital. My wife, Dr. Vidushi Sharma, has been the biggest supporter in my professional and personal success. I consider her my confidant, philosopher, and guide.

My Mentors Who Shaped My Medical Career

I had the good fortune to come across many inspiring teachers and mentors who inspired me to become a successful doctor. I am grateful to my mentors, Prof. Jagat Ram, Prof. Amod Gupta, Prof. Mangat Dogra, Late Dr. J. S. Saini, Dr. Ashok Sharma, Dr. S. S. Pandav, Dr. Kanwar Mohan, Dr. Arun K. Jain, Dr. Usha Singh at PGIMER, Chandigarh, Prof. David J. Apple in USA, Dr. Anthony J. Maloof and Dr. E. John Milverton in Australia, who were instrumental in shaping and refining the surgeon in me as they taught me the art of eye microsurgery using both the right and the left hands.

I am also thankful to my friends Dr. Somesh Gupta and Dr. Man Singh Chandel. I draw inspiration from books written by Shriram Sharma Acharya of Gayatri Pariwar. My passion is to motivate young students to become better citizens of India and to excel in their field.

Awards and Recognition

I was felicitated with the Achievement Award by the American Academy of Ophthalmology. I was awarded the Gold Medal by the Indian Intraocular Implant and Refractive Surgery Society twice. I was invited to perform ‘Live Surgery’ at the international meeting at Milan, Italy as well as in several cities of India. These include New Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad, Chennai, Visakhapatnam, etc. I was also awarded for the Best Surgical Videos by the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery, USA. Dr. Vidushi and I were honored by the National President of IMA for Outstanding Community Service Awards and the Government of Rajasthan awarded us for our outstanding work in the field of ophthalmic teaching and the elimination of preventable blindness.

Over the years, we have had many international doctors at our clinic. More than 100 eye surgeons from India and overseas (USA, UK, Middle East and Europe) have visited our facility at Kota to witness our cutting-edge work in the field of Ophthalmology.

Family and Life beyond Ophthalmology

I got married in June 2002. It was an arranged marriage and my spouse Dr. Vidushi Sharma is also an ophthalmologist. During that time, she was pursuing her senior residency at Dr. R. P. Center for ophthalmic sciences, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, India. We are three members in our family- my wife, myself and our 14-year-old daughter, Ishita.

Beyond Medical Practice

I enjoy gardening, cycling, swimming, listening to music, reading novels, books and visiting new places are my favorite activities. Currently, I am developing a small garden in my farmhouse. I maintain it during the weekend.

Secrets to Become a Successful Doctor

Complete your medical studies and specialization training at the right age before you plunge into family responsibilities. Get the requisite qualifications, training and exposure before making any other commitment. Do not compromise on your medical training. Get the best possible training that you can get and empower yourself. Interested readers can go through my recently published book Secrets of Successful Doctors: A Complete Guide to a Fulfilling Medical Career (Figure 37.1).

Figure 37.1. Dr. Suresh K Pandey and Dr. Vidushi presented their book 'Secrets of Successful Doctors: A complete guide fulfilling Medical Career to Padma Shri Prof. Jagat Ram, Director, PGIMER, Chandigarh

Success depends on you how much knowledge you can gain from your teachers or mentors. If you are receptive, obedient, hard-working and eager to learn, there is no end to how much you can learn from them.

When you graduate and enter professional life, prioritize your patients' welfare over everything else. If you run a private practice, adhere to ethical and medical protocols. Learn how to deal with patients and improve your

communication skills. Be approachable and accessible to your patients. Be determined and resilient.

Above all, do not stress in the face of adversity. Setbacks are bound to come in life. In the end, the one who succeeds is the one who does not allow setbacks to affect him.

As Churchill famously said,

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal."

My Passion (Giving the Joy of Sight) and Message To Young Doctors

In these times of increasing expectations and diminishing trust, sometimes we as doctors tend to feel frustrated – for being doubted for our intentions, being needlessly questioned, and for patients being constantly suspicious and argumentative. Sometimes when matters go too far, they end up in courtrooms or in worse cases end up in violence against doctors.

However, the patients need to realize that for one incident that they hear of some wrong being done by doctors, thousands of honest doctors tirelessly treat countless patients and make their lives better. Medicine is a complex subject, and patient's response to treatment/surgical procedure(s) may vary due to many factors. Similarly, I would like young doctors to know that this profession gives a lot of satisfaction, and there are thousands of grateful patients who make this whole journey worthwhile. This is one profession where we derive satisfaction through financial rewards or professional growth and the knowledge of making a lifelong impact in another person's life.

As Helen Keller said, *"The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart."*

I feel extremely fortunate to firstly be doctor and secondly be ophthalmologist, who can make a difference in the life of so many people.

Chapter 38
Timeless Wisdom: What I Learned at PGIMER, Chandigarh

"I thankfully acknowledge all the hard work done by all my mentors to shape a career in Ophthalmology. I dedicate this chapter to all the respected mentors who worked very hard during the junior residency (Ophthalmology) period at the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh, India and helped to shape my career in the field of Ophthalmology."

-Dr. Suresh K. Pandey

Teachers are the backbone of any academic institution and always play a significant role in shaping the life and career of students. Teachers are the lights of our life as they sculpt us to bring the best out of us and inspire us to excel in professional life.

The Excellent Mentors with Passion for Teaching and Training:

I consider myself very fortunate to be trained at one of the prestigious medical institutions of the country with a dedicated team of faculty members. I offer gratitude and sincerely thank all my teachers, Padma Shri Prof. Amod Gupta, Padma Shri Prof. Jagat Ram, Late Dr. J. S. Saini, Prof. Mangat R. Dogra, Dr. Ashok Sharma, Prof. Arun K. Jain, Dr. Kanwar Mohan, Prof. S.S. Pandav, Prof. Usha Singh at PGIMER Chandigarh. Prof. Amod Gupta was the chief during the time I was doing my residency in Ophthalmology and he inspired everyone who was trained by him and his excellent faculty members. The faculty members' dedication to teaching, patient care and research was commendable. As an Ophthalmology resident of the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) Chandigarh during 1995-97, I was fortunate to be trained by the dedicated faculty members who had a passion for teaching and training. This chapter is a tribute to my teachers and recollection from the diary of a junior resident 25 years back. I thank all my teachers for their dedication to teaching and research without which it was

almost impossible to achieve the current position.

Teachers as Multi-talented Leaders:

The faculty members and teachers at PGIMER, Chandigarh work as a clinician, surgeon, researcher, administrator, mentor, visionary and well-wisher of all residents and team of advance eye center, PGIMER, Chandigarh. My firsthand experience of leadership of Prof. Amod Gupta, Prof. Jagat Ram was a few months before the All India Ophthalmology Society Conference (AIOS) conference in 1996. Prof. Amod Gupta called a meeting of all faculty members and residents, set a goal and asked them to work hard to make the conference a memorable one. The AIOS 1996 conference was very successful and gave all residents to attend the live surgery and lectures by the renowned ophthalmic faculty from India and overseas.

The Saga of Discipline, Dedication and Devotion

While pursuing residency in Ophthalmology at PGIMER, Chandigarh, the discipline, timing to attend the Outpatient Department (OPD), ward and Operation Theatre (OT) and a strict schedule of teaching such as grand round, journal club, staff clinical meet, was a regular feature. Residents learned discipline, dedication and devotion not by words but by action and examples of all the faculty members. Most faculty members were astute clinicians, voracious readers and they were aware of the latest publications in Ophthalmology and always asked thought-provoking questions during the grand rounds and this ensured that residents prepared their cases very well. I remember preparing my first case for the grand round - *'tuberculosis of the lacrimal gland,'* one month in advance by collecting (photocopying) all published articles, reading them, preparing slides (patient details, differential diagnosis and management), organizing the clinical photos, images of investigations, etc. After completion of the grand round, I was encouraged by Dr. Ashok Sharma to write the manuscript and publish this case and this was my first international publication in the Journal of Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus.[1]

During the grand round, faculty members would ask a lot of questions related to clinical examination, differential diagnosis and always emphasized on bedside (slit lamp side) teaching in Ophthalmology. They would always insist on systemic examination of the case when necessary, by emphasizing

that, in the multidisciplinary academic institutes like PGIMER, all residents were fortunate that we were able to communicate our concerns and challenges to our multidisciplinary colleagues without any hesitation. During the grand round and case discussion, we were told not to blindly follow the recommendations coming from the western world without any reference to our own population, data or experience. The insistence for publications, presentations during the conference, state and national was enormous. I found that aspect difficult, but when I came out of PGIMER, Chandigarh with a dozen publications/presentations and enormous confidence for delivering scientific lectures, which I feel is very important in today's era.

Teachers are Lifelong Students!

Due to excellent networking in academic circles, many renowned ophthalmologists visited PGIMER, Chandigarh at regular intervals. Many alumni of PGIMER, Chandigarh settled abroad, visited the Ophthalmology department as guest speakers to share their experience. Dr. Vinod Lakhanpal, Dr. V.S. Nirankari, Dr. Yadavinder P. Dang were a few of them. One of the guest faculties (from USA), visited the Ophthalmology department, PGIMER in 1996. During the telephonic conversation, the visiting retina faculty proudly told Prof. Gupta that he would be presenting some unusual retinal cases, fluorescein angiograms and most of these cases (compiled from an eye institute in the USA) would be completely new for residents in India. Prof. Gupta took this as a challenge and he asked residents to collect (and present) a series of unusual retina cases. He ensured that all cases were unusual ones and residents documented these cases nicely (slit-lamp photo, fundus photos, investigations), prepared them well and residents even rehearsed their presentations in front of faculty members. When the visiting faculty arrived from USA, Prof. Gupta requested the faculty to listen to cases presented by the residents and helped the residents reach the diagnosis of these difficult cases. The guest speaker was surprised by the knowledge and documentation done by the residents and a lot of time was spent in discussing these cases. The speaker then tried to rush through his slides. Prof. Gupta requested him to take his time and deliver the lecture without being in a hurry. As the Head of the Department of Ophthalmology, Prof. Gupta successfully conveyed the message to the guest faculty about the high academic standard of a premier institute in a developing country.

Teachers are Always Proud of their Students!

After completing the Ophthalmology residency in December 1997, I joined the fellowship at Storm Eye Institute, Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston, SC, USA in June 1998. I visited India in 2000 and met Prof. Amod Gupta, Prof. Jagat Ram, Prof. M. R. Dogra and other faculty members. They encouraged me to give a lecture to motivate residents. I was fortunate to visit my alma mater once again on March 18, 2013, during the Advanced Eye Center, PGIMER Foundation Day to deliver a keynote address (Figure 38.1). We were fortunate to invite Prof. Amod Gupta and Prof. Jagat Ram during the Rajasthan Ophthalmological Society (ROS) Conferences to deliver the prestigious ‘Prof. Anila Khuteta Oration.’ We had also invited Prof. Mangat R. Dogra at Kota to deliver ‘IMA World Sight Day Oration’ on the occasion of World Sight Day (October 12, 2014). Prof. Amod Gupta (Director, AEC, PGIMER, Chandigarh), Dr. Jyotirmay Biswas (Chief, Uveitis Dept. Sankara Nethralaya, Chennai), Prof. (Dr.) Kirti Singh (Director, Guru Nanak Eye Center, MAMC, New Delhi) inaugurated "Wall of Pioneers in Ophthalmology" at SuVi Eye Hospital campus, Kota on Sept. 5, 2014.

Padma Shri Prof. Amod Gupta

Presenting a Memento to Dr. Suresh K. Pandey during the PGIMER AEC Foundation Day (March 18, 2013).

Teachers are Mentors

Prof. Gupta and his entire team's dedication to teaching and training in Ophthalmology is unmatched. This dedication, vision and determination resulted in the creation of the Advanced Eye Center (AEC) at PGIMER, Chandigarh. The message was very clear in advising residents that when they entered any particular career stream, they just had to follow their heart and do what they were passionate about and follow their dreams, learn while remaining a lifelong student. They mentored several residents like me following the dictum- a good mentor is a coach, asking questions more often than giving answers. Mentors have an important role in guiding the residents

as they develop their own special attributes. The role is difficult and requires training, time and mutual trust.

Teachers can Become a Turning Point in a Career

So many teachers shaped not just my professional life but also helped me as a friend, philosopher and a guide. I acknowledge the contribution made by my mentors and teachers and highly appreciate them. I am highly grateful to Padma Shri Prof. Jagat Ram, who was my thesis guide during my Ophthalmology residency training at PGIMER and who assisted me in getting a fellowship with Prof. David J. Apple in the Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston, SC, USA. The opportunity to work under Prof. Apple's mentorship provided me with a platform to explore the world of Ophthalmology and meet some of the greatest inventors in the field of Ophthalmology, including Sir Harold Ridley who invented the IOL, Dr. Charles D. Kelman who invented phacoemulsification, researchers, innovators, prolific surgeons and opinion makers from all over the world.

Great Teachers Inspire

The clinical experience and research-oriented teaching by the highly committed and yet friendly faculty members made the 3 years of residency the most glorious years of my professional life to be cherished forever. All residents have an excellent opportunity to see very unusual clinical cases not only from Punjab and Haryana but also referred from adjoining states of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir.

All faculty members emphasized on proper history, meticulous clinical examination, proper documentation, connecting the missing link and thinking out of the box. The message was very clear - make a habit of good observation, document, document, document and try to present and publish unusual cases resulting in significant contribution to the literature. I was inspired by great teachers who laid the foundation of my professional career in Ophthalmology 25 years back. I have shared my professional journey and lessons learned in two recently published books- Secrets of Successful Doctors and A Hippocratic Odyssey: Lessons from a Doctor Couple on Life in Medicine, Challenges, and Doctorpreneurship. [2],[3]

I thanks all my mentors from the core of my heart for their significant efforts to lay the foundation of an ophthalmic career. I, indeed, feel proud to be a PGIMER alumnus!

Figure 38.2. The Advanced Eye Center, PGIMER Alumni get together during the All India Ophthalmology Society (AIOS) Conference held at Indore, MP (February 2019).

Chapter 39
An AIIMSONIAN'S Journey into Medical Entrepreneurship and Lessons Learned

"After completing my medical training and ophthalmology residency from AIIMS, New Delhi, and fellowship training from Australia, my professional journey progressed through an uncharted path. I returned to India and decided to start an ophthalmic practice from scratch in a non metro city. I faced several challenges during my journey as an entrepreneur while managing a private ophthalmic practice. My formula for success in the medical field consists of 6 Cs that include "Commitment, Competence, Care, Compassion, Communication, and Constant Improvement." Nothing in this world can take the place of Dedication, Determination and Diligence to achieve success. As someone said - Talent alone will not get you success: nothing is more common than unsuccessful person with talent. Genius will also not get you success; "unrewarded genius" is almost a proverb. Education will also not get you there: the world is full of educated derelicts. Patience, persistence and perspiration make an unbeatable combination for success in any field."

-Dr. Vidushi Sharma

My Journey to Vision:

I consider myself very fortunate for completing my medical education (MBBS) as well as Ophthalmology residency from the country's premier medical institute, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi. A career as an ophthalmologist (eye specialist) is extremely rewarding and is especially useful for women wanting to maintain work-life and work-family balance. Ophthalmology offers the adrenaline rush associated with performing delicate sight-restoring surgeries, yet you do not deal with a stressful life and death situations. It is also possible to do predominantly medical ophthalmology or medical retina etc., so it is suitable for everyone.

In my own case, I have been lucky that I have had the opportunity to study

medical curriculum in India (AIIMS, New Delhi) and overseas (John A Moran Eye Center, Salt Lake City, USA and University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia). My husband, Dr. Suresh K. Pandey and I have established SuVi Eye Institute & Lasik Laser Center in Kota on February 5, 2006 and our practice in the field of Ophthalmology has been successful in every way. It is not just satisfying in terms of work satisfaction and rewards, but it has also given me a platform to engage in various activities and make my own contributions to helping the doctor-patient relationship. I have spoken at Indian Medical Association (IMA) meetings, national and international Ophthalmology conferences, Kota's coaching institutions and other organizations. I have also contributed articles in the scientific journals as well as in the local press and I have utilized many opportunities to try and improve and strengthen the doctor-patient relationship as far as possible, which has been a very rewarding experience.

Women Doctors: Entrepreneurship and Overcoming Challenges

Many patients have a certain mindset about women doctors. While they may trust you more and also consider you to have more empathy, some patients may feel that female doctors are surgically not as competent. If you have an extremely hardworking and ambitious husband (and in the same specialty like me), it often becomes even more difficult to carve a distinct identity for yourself and this has been my biggest challenge. Luckily for me, I have had excellent training in Ophthalmology from the prestigious Dr. R. P. Center for ophthalmic sciences, AIIMS, New Delhi and the Sydney Eye Hospital, University of Sydney, Australia where I have been trained in oculoplastic surgery, pediatric ophthalmology, etc. This ensured that I do a variety of ophthalmic surgeries – not just cataract-lens implant surgery, but also lasik laser refractive surgery, oculoplastic surgery, glaucoma surgery, squint surgery, routine and complex ocular trauma and so on, which are not done by most ophthalmologists and this helped me to carve a distinct identity for myself.

As a medical entrepreneur, the most difficult thing is human resource management, just like in most other fields and I have been lucky that we have been able to find and develop an outstanding team, which has made a huge difference to the smooth working of the SuVi Eye Hospital & Lasik Laser Center in Kota, having good relations with our patients.

Women Empowerment in Health Care

Women empowerment in health care is a bit of a loaded term and it would be vain to think that I can make a significant contribution towards that single-handedly. However, currently, there are many efforts to ensure that women health care professionals form their own groups to get good mentoring and ensure their career progress. The Indian Medical Association (IMA) is coming up with women's wings in all states and sub-specialties are also forming women societies, like the Women in Ophthalmology Society, which has affiliated chapters like the Women Ophthalmologists' Society (WOS) in India.

I am happy to be a part of these initiatives that provide women doctors with tools and opportunities to advance their professional growth. Wider interaction among women colleagues is a great inspiration to motivate young doctors. Also, among the staff working at SuVi Eye Hospital & Lasik Laser Center in Kota, I have always tried to ensure that we have a sympathetic attitude towards the genuine problems faced by women and ensure that their male colleagues also understand the importance of giving slightly more space to women. Based on my experience as an ophthalmic entrepreneur, I have also conducted a few sessions for young ophthalmologists (including women) about career options, challenges for women ophthalmologists and other topics. Also, I have written articles and made YouTube videos on these topics. It has been my honor that after seeing my videos, several young doctors have contacted me to seek guidance about their careers and it is my privilege that I have helped and counseled them to the best extent possible.

Secrets to Establishing Private Medical Practice

After returning from overseas, I, together with my spouse (Dr. Suresh K. Pandey) started ophthalmic practice with little money and tried to set up SuVi Eye Hospital & Lasik Laser Center, in Kota (Rajasthan) in a rented premises on February 5, 2006 (Figure 39.1).

Figure 39.1 Inauguration of SuVi Eye Hospital, Kota on February 5, 2006. Left to Right: Dr. Vidushi Sharma, Mrs. Ghose, Dr. Supriyo Ghose (Chief, Dr. R. P. Center, AIIMS, New Delhi), Dr. Amita Birla, Shri Om Birla (Current Lok Sabha Speaker), and Dr. Suresh K. Pandey.

Within a few years, we built a new building for our hospital having all the latest gadgets. We started with an auto-refractometer, an operating microscope and a phacoemulsification machine. Initially, our O.P.D. was 5-10 patients per day. Within one year, the good word spread about our work and the patient numbers increased slowly and gradually to 100-120 patients per day and now we see approximately 250 patients every day and perform 8 to 10 laser/major and minor eye surgeries per day. So far, our team of doctors has done more than 100,000 successful eye surgeries and laser procedures with a high success rate and about 2,000 eye surgeries free of cost to the needy patients.

SuVi Eye Hospital & Lasik Laser Center, Kota has “World Class Eye Surgery Facilities” including Visx Lasik Laser Machine (for freedom from glasses), Signature Phacoemulsification machine/Zepto Cataract Surgery system (Phacoemulsification or suture-less cataract surgery), Zeiss Lumera operating surgical microscope and DORC Eva phaco vitrectomy machine (for suture-less vitreo-retinal surgery), Oculus Pentacam (for diagnosis of corneal disorders), Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT), Specular Microscope, IOL Master (for lens power calculation), Retinal Green Laser and Fundus Fluorescein Angiography (FFA) and several other valuable diagnostic and surgical equipment to treat all routine and complex eye problems.

We have a team of competent doctors (Dr. Suresh K. Pandey, Dr. Nipun Bagrecha, Dr. Satyendra Kumar Gupta and myself), one visiting

retinal doctor (Dr. Abhishek Kothari) and total 40 staff members to help us in day-to-day activities of the hospital. My father, late
Gp. Capt. K.M. Sharma was the force behind this vision. He inspired us to return to India from overseas and he also put in a lot of effort for staff training and human resource management at our hospital.

SuVi Eye Hospital & Lasik Laser Center provide complete eye care services in all sub-specialties, with all the latest diagnostic and therapeutic modalities in the tier two city of Kota (Rajasthan) by the best-trained doctors. We pride ourselves on having a patient-friendly atmosphere and immensely value the enormous support and trust that we have received from our patients. Several doctors (ophthalmologist trainees and observers from India and abroad) have visited Kota, India including from USA, Switzerland, Ireland, Saudi Arabia, Azerbaijan and Iraq to observe our model of private practice.

Why a non-Metro City to Start a Medical Practice?

This question is often asked by several colleagues, well-wishers and occasionally by a few coaching students (medical aspirants and their parents) while coming for an eye check-up. While it would be tempting to give a clichéd answer like “we wanted to come back to our roots and serve our own people,” which of course is true, the bigger reason is that it makes much more sense to settle down in tier two cities in India today. Even while I was pursuing further training overseas and my juniors doctors asked me about future prospects, I always encouraged them to settle down in these non-metro cities, as it is less expensive to establish and faster to build up a medical practice in these cities. The family contacts provide the initial patient base and good services provide the word of mouth publicity, which is very effective in these non-metro cities. Life is more relaxed; you do not have to travel large distances and can use your time more productively.

Doctors and Social Services

At our hospital, we have always tried to provide the best services to all patients, irrespective of their paying capacity. I consider it an achievement that in spite of providing cutting-edge high-end surgery like micro-incision cataract surgery and premium IOLs, refractive surgery, etc., we have also been able to provide equal quality of service to all our patients and have a wide spectrum of patients from all kinds of socio-economic backgrounds. We have also organized many free OPD check-up camps, where patients are provided free follow-up and necessary investigations in the hospital and have

seen more than 90,000 patients in these camps. Apart from this, we have also done free surgery for needy patients. I am humbled and honored to get the "Women of the Year Zonal Award" from the former Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Smt. Vasundhara Raje. The Government of Rajasthan also felicitated myself and my husband (Dr. Suresh K. Pandey) for the significant work in the field of Ophthalmology and elimination of preventable blindness.

Book for Coaching Students

During the course of my practice in Kota, I interacted with a lot of coaching students who visited me for their eye problems. Many of them were interested in talking to me, especially the medical aspirants, as I have done M.B.B.S. and M.D. from AIIMS, New Delhi, which is still on the top of the list for most of these students. I also observed that a lot of students were from small towns and cities and were not as confident as their counterparts from bigger cities. For this reason, I wrote a motivational book in Hindi for coaching students as well as other youngsters from not so privileged backgrounds. The book is titled "Meri Kitab, Meri Dost" and engages in a friendly conversation with the reader. It is an attempt to help them develop a positive mindset so that they give in their best efforts and also remain happy in all situations in life (Figures 39.2 & 39.3).

Figure 39.2: Release of Dr. Vidushi's book Meri Kitab Meri Dost done on August 12, 2017. Left to Right: Sh. Govind Maheshwari, Dr. A. Q. Khan, Dr. Pramod Tiwari, Prof. Girish Verma, Sh. Rohit Gupta (IAS, District Collector, Kota), Sh. Nitin Vijay, Sh. Rajesh Maheshwari, Dr. Vidushi Sharma, Dr. Suresh K. Pandey.

Figure 39.3. Dr. Vidushi and Dr. Suresh K. Pandey sharing their professional journey with medical aspirants (NEET coaching students) of Kota City.

Take-Home Message & Lessons Learned: Advice to Young Doctors, Especially Women Doctors

➢ My first advice to young doctors would be to focus on getting the best possible training at the earliest opportunity. This is even more important for women, as it becomes very difficult to devote time to full-time rigorous medical training programs at a later stage in life, particularly after marriage and kids.

➢ At an early age, it is possible to travel far and wide for the best training opportunities, especially in surgical disciplines. Medical practice is not easy because of heightened patient expectations and an aggressive consumer culture that is spreading fast. In such a scenario, it is absolutely essential to get the best possible clinical training, so that our competence is our big strength when starting a clinical practice.

➢ I would also like to advise young doctors to choose their work based on their own personality and preferences. Some people are very good at communication and interpersonal relations and therefore do well in private practice. Some other people are interested in teaching and do well in an academic setting. Some realize that they would do well in non-clinical branches and some others decide they would want to change their field altogether.

➢ Assess your priorities and desires and take an informed decision, as you can’t keep changing these decisions. The most important thing is to decide

your own definition of success and then stick to it, so that you are not just successful, but also truly happy.

Part VI

COVID-19 Diary: Managing Medical Practice during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Chapter 40
How to Survive and Manage the Medical Practice during the COVID-19 Crisis?

"The coronavirus pandemic is described as humanity's worst crisis since World War II. It will undoubtedly take time to overcome. As a health professional, we should hope for the best, but be prepared for the worst. The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that only unconditional passion for this profession and resilience can help doctors cope with a pandemic. Doctors, health care professionals and administrative staff should stay united while carrying this battle against this invisible enemy and use their collaborative efforts to create a practical and cost-effective plan for the future. Let us keep a close watch on how the situation unfolds and adopt an innovative solution to solve the problems that arrived on all fronts. It is the only way to ensure that our medical practice, or any medical practice for the matter, can survive a crisis."

- Dr. Vidushi Sharma

Coronavirus (COVID-19) has swiftly enveloped the world as it suspiciously lingers around us. For many doctors and health care specialists, the novel virus is a turning point of health havoc and economic crisis, as we witness this time with a relatively unknown future filled with uncertainties.

On 1 April 2020, the Secretary General of the United Nations stated that the coronavirus would cause a 'great global economic recession' that probably has no parallel in the recent past. The World Bank had also warned that 'significant economic pain' will be 'unavoidable in all countries.'

The strict lockdown and social distancing also has a drastic impact on the medical field. It has led to the transition from on-premises medical consultations to telemedicine.

Virtual consultation with doctors is perhaps one of the significant changes we are going to witness as a result of the deadly second wave of corona crisis. Due to this, many of us are developing contingency plans to recover from this unstable situation.

This chapter hopes to shed light on different tips that could help medical practices stay afloat during these testing times. From telemedicine, devising cost management plans to resolving internal conflicts, we hope to offer words of wisdom that could help us to navigate out of worst-case scenarios. However, before we delve deep into an action plan, let us take a moment to understand the severity of this situation.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Health Care: An Overview

In December 2019, China witnessed the start of an outbreak in Wuhan, Hubei.[1] The Chinese doctors tried their best to contain the acute respiratory syndrome caused by a 'new variant of coronavirus 2019-nCoV,' but all their efforts were in vain. The disease soon spread all over the world, which compelled the World Health Organization (WHO) to label it a pandemic on 11 March 2020.[2]

As of April 25, 2021, an online database reported approximately 147,174,483 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in more than 219 countries and territories across the world. The current death toll is estimated to be 3,115,299.[3] The continuous death, nationwide lockdowns and inadequate supply of health care equipment have had a drastic impact on the economy. [4]

The United Nations Trade and Development Agency (UNCTAD) predicts that the world economy will suffer gravely due to the inhibition in world trade operations. The estimated amount of loss is forecasted to be $1 trillion. [5] Even after the pandemic, it might take years to rebuild the 'fragile economy.'[6]

The health care economy will face a similar situation in the coming several weeks or even months. Therefore, it is prudent for private medical practices to prepare for worst-case scenarios to safeguard their practices. These are the questions that haunt us as we witness everything during these changing times. The only hope to stabilize this situation is by taking practical and reasonable steps to secure the practice.

Tips for Survival: What Should Medical Practices Do?

Several questions are flashing in the minds of many of us like: How will the COVID-19 pandemic affect the population size in India and globally? Where

will medical practices stand in the aftermath of a pandemic outbreak? How do they survive the economic and other challenges (short-term or long-term) faced by doctors before things settle down?

Here are a few trends that many private practices and health care facilities are adopting these days, especially in countries that are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Medical entrepreneurs need to devise strategies to revive their practice and to come with an innovative solution to address several challenges.

Patient Visit and Surgery to Hospital or Day Care Centers

Patient triage and all the cautions can be remembered with the acronym **SCREEN: S:** Sanitize hands **C:** Consent/declaration/hand hygiene, use of masks by the patient R: Rapid patient turnaround, Restrict entry of the attendant **E:** Examination by a flashlight or use of a slit lamp taking all precautions **E:** Encourage physical distancing **N:** No cash (encourage digital payment), No aerosol-generating procedures.

While seeing emergency cases or in routine OPD, it is essential to take all adequate precautions and follow the guidelines as suggested in an excellent Editorial(i) and by the medical societies.

As they say, it's 'better to be safe than to be sorry!'

All doctors and staff members should take adequate precautions while seeing emergency cases. Use of face masks, frequent hand washing, social distancing, minimal touching and talking, use of slit lamp with protective cover, etc. will be helpful. Emphasis should be given to social distancing, frequent hand washing and hand hygiene.

Even before the pandemic, hand hygiene was becoming a center of attention after the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) reported the poor hygiene practices by health care workers even in developed countries like USA.[7] The focus on hygiene has reached a whole new level these days. That's why we should not let go of the current hygiene practices when things return to normalcy.

The Rise of Digitization/Online Consultation

In the last few years, the corporate world has been buzzing with the activity as they embrace digital tools to streamline their workload. Yet, the health care industry kept a people-first mentality, even though we were slowly

adapting to incorporate technology into our daily activities.

However, COVID-19 has transformed the health care industry as we are witnessing it every day. Online screenings, consultations and telemedicine are becoming a norm now. In China alone, there was a 900 percent increase in subscribers for popular online health care services like 'Ping an Good Doctor'.[8] Other telemedicine platforms saw a similar surge, as patients skipped primary care providers for their online counterparts.

India's largest online consultation platforms (Practo, Zoylo, Lybrate, Ask Apollo, etc.) have seen a significant increase in the number of consultations in the past few weeks. The rise of digital solutions mean that patients might replace routine checkups with virtual remote consultations long after it is safe to venture outdoors.

Other tech-first practices include the availability of slit lamp protectors using the special sheet and other devices that help to see medical cases while maintaining a distance. Moreover, medical surgeons in COVID-19 affected countries are considering Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and medical professionals in developed countries may consider robot-assisted surgeries.[9] This way, the contact between patient and surgeon is barely required during practice. This option, however, will not be feasible in developing countries like India. There are other things that Indian doctors can do to assist their patients. For instance, doctors engaged in private practices should not plan to expand or buy any high-tech equipment at present until the situation and economy come back to normal. It is important to remember that this may take several months or even a few years. During the lockdown period, it is important to prepare the plan of action and come with innovative low-cost solutions.

It will be pertinent to go to EMR (Electronic Medical Records, etc. if you haven't already) and begin scheduling online appointments and collecting payment. Practicing these things now would make it easier for medical practitioners to adapt to the tech-oriented practices in the foreseeable future.

Cost Management and Financial Contingency Plans

Private practices need to start adjusting their budget plans. The finance department needs to calculate current cancellations and possible setbacks in the coming weeks and months. Tallying those results will give an accurate picture of the financial situation. One should always consider precautionary

measures to minimize revenue loss and measures to save money.[10]

Revive the Financial Reserve of the Practice

Assess cash reserve of the practice and prepare a plan for survival taking in worst-case scenarios. It is important to accelerate the collection of due amounts by the Third Party Agency (TPA) and all insurance companies and by chasing the debtors. Consider reduction of the fixed cost by converting full-time doctors to part-time doctors and convert full-time anesthetists to on-call duty professionals. One should cut short all unnecessary expenses like minimizing cost in marketing (newspaper, television, etc.). Also, private practices can adapt to low-cost digital marketing by using social media to maintain visibility and the presence of the practice.

Force Majeure Clause and Equipment Maintenance

Consider a reduction in rental cost by following the force majeure clause (if applicable) or by handing over the extra space that is not needed at present. Also, consider the extension of Comprehensive Maintenance Contract (CMC) and Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) of important equipment by a few months as mentioned before. Train and sensitize your staff to save money by preventing wastage and by minimizing the use of costly disposable items.

Review the Inventory of Supplies and Pause Expansion

Firstly, do an inventory of the implants, surgical adjuncts, pharma items/drug supplies in stock and those we require in the future. Then identify expenditures that aren’t necessary to ensure that we don’t run out of essential supplies. The unnecessary expenses could include planned extensions within the facility, renovations or out-reach medical/eye camps and other programs. You should also postpone the idea of expansion, a new instrument or hiring non-essential staff until further notice.

Insurance Cover for COVID-19 and Business Interruption Insurance

Review the insurance policy to check if they cover COVID-19 associated liabilities. Understanding the validity of your insurance coverage and its potential will make it easier for you to make an administrative decision. Request them to provide coverage for preoperative COVID-19 tests. You can also request bank/money lenders to waive off or reduce installment during this period.

Additionally, business interruption insurance may be an option for the practice if you have significant business losses as a result of the lockdown

due to the pandemic. You can discuss insurance management about business interruption insurance to cover unexpected major events and see what qualifies for coverage. It may not cover this emergency, but you'll be better prepared the next time your business suffers similar economic losses.

Legal Aid

You should consult with a legal advisor. The consultation can ensure that all your paperwork is up to date. They can also create a liability form that safeguards your practice. The form would state that your medical practice will not be held liable in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak within the premises.

Staff Salary and Incentives, etc.

Start developing a financial contingency plan with your charted accountant or financial expert. You must inform employees about possible cutbacks in the salary, bonus, incentives, working hours or other amenities they use. Also, request them to cooperate if there is a delay in their annual salary, bonuses and incentives. Communicate and sensitize the entire team to be ready for a salary cut, working on weekends and laying off in the worst-case scenario. These small steps will ensure that the practice doesn't struggle with major financial problems during and post-COVID-19 pandemic.

Reshaping Contract, Medical Protocols and Collaborations

The COVID-19 pandemic and its medical implications and precautions are highlighted aptly in a recent editorial and article.[11] There the authors talk about the risk of contracting the virus during slit-lamp examinations and other medical procedures. Due to this, it becomes essential for medical practitioners within your facility to take complete precautions while they are with a patient. These include wearing masks for the nose, eyes and mouth during surgery. These measures are mandatory for treating patients who have recently traveled or show visible symptoms of fever or a respiratory disorder.[12]

Besides this, you should start screening patients beforehand. The best strategy is to cancel non-urgent appointments and consulting patients who are ill. We should also ask the staff to stay at home if they are having a fever or cough. Also, make sure that your employees are updated about revised guidelines and regulations. This will make it easier for them to respond to emergencies and act quickly in case of an emergency.

Moreover, the medical staff must reevaluate their assignments. You must cultivate a feeling of camaraderie and community amongst peers.[13] Ask them to assist each other during emergencies and swap clinical hours whenever required.

It is important for the practice to prepare the revised contract and include all details about COVID-19 and the possibility to get infected while working in a hospital. It is important to get it duly signed (as advised by a legal expert) by all the staff members. Following these guidelines can mitigate the spread of the infection as well as it will save the practice with legal implications if some staff turns positive for COVID-19 and files a compensation case against the hospital.

Group Practice and Models Sharing the Costly Equipment

Other initiatives include sharing facilities (e.g., surgical facilities, laser and surgical equipment) with other private practices to decrease overhead charges. If possible, you can share medical staff and send terminated employees to aid understaffed practices. The mutual support will strengthen your professional network and also pave the way for possible business opportunities in the future.

Virtual Conferences and e-CMEs

International travel and travel to attend conferences are also banned to limit the spread of COVID-19. The All India Ophthalmology Society as well as other medical societies successfully organized several webinars/virtual conferences during the one year period of on going the COVID-19 crisis. Some of the virtual conferences were organized in collaboration with international medical societies and well attended by doctors from around the world.

Leadership during the Lockdown

The coronavirus pandemic is described as humanity’s worst crisis since World War II. It will undoubtedly take time to overcome. It is important to be proactive and communicate things effectively. You should also spread positivity to build team morale and uplift spirits during these testing times.

With that said, it is equally important to portray a realistic picture. You should lead your practitioners by adopting tough measures and handling areas of concern. Additionally, you should instill the importance of institutions over self, maintain transparency and provide frequent updates to the team.

The coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19 pandemic) is going to leave a dark mark on the history of mankind. In only a few months, the pandemic has led to the loss of human life and the global economic recession, along with social and political upheaval.

As medical practitioners, we should hope for the best but be prepared for the worst. We have to safeguard our life as well as our livelihood and those of our patients. In times like these, we should keep in mind the '5 Rs' for the rapid recovery of the economy: Resolve, Resilience, Return, Re-imagination and Reform (exhibit).[14]

That means that the first order of business is to resolve real-time challenges that the practice might face due to the pandemic. We then have to create a cost-effective business plan that minimizes cash-related problems. Then think of ways through which we can return to normalcy. The next step is to re-imagine and recreate business operations to fit the current circumstances. Lastly, we should consider how the environment and industry have reformed due to the situation. The collection of these steps can make the institution more robust and more resilient. Hence, this proves that strategic changes and forward-thinking can prepare medical practices for an unpredictable future. In the end, strong leadership is the key to the current situation. India is fortunate to have a strong political leader as our Prime Minister. Most of the health professionals need to stay united and help each other during this crucial time while fighting against the coronavirus.

The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that only unconditional passion for this profession and resilience can help doctors cope with a pandemic. We must, however, not forget the importance of pragmatism. Doctors and administrative staff should use their collaborative efforts to create a practical and cost-effective plan for the future. The plan should include everything from cost management and patient care to adopting digital solutions. Along with this, health care facilities must arrange a contingency plan to respond quickly in the event of a disaster.

With that said, we must not forget the humane quality of our profession. Don't let digitization weaken the doctor–patient relationship we have forged over the years. Make sure that they are updated on any changes and also listen to their feedback. This way, we can continue providing them with the best care possible.

Let us keep a close watch on how the situation unfolds and adopt an innovative solution to solve the problems that arrived on all fronts. It is the only way to ensure that our medical practice or any medical practice for that matter, can survive a crisis.

Take-Home Message

The toolkit for managing medical practice during the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic can be emphasized by the acronym:

CORONAVIRUS-

➢ C: Consent/declaration from all the patients and cut down unnecessary expenses

➢ **O:** Outline the plan to manage the practice such as standard operating procedures/Protocols to ensure safety for all the team members as well as for patients. Over communicate/communicate clearly with your team members.

➢ **R:** Review Finances and prepare a realistic plan keeping the worst case scenario in mind.

➢ **O:** Outstanding bills/dues to be collected from the insurance company.

➢ **N:** No to buying costly equipment and no to new expansion of practice till practice volume comes to normal.

➢ **A:** Arrange all necessary items to stop or limit COVID-19 transmission (masks/sanitizers/safety glasses/personal protection equipment, if needed).

➢ **V:** Virtual Consultation (Telehealth) or consultation on phone/WhatsApp for follow-up patients.

➢ **I:** Inventory management (check all stock, other inventory and return the excessive or near expiry items you do not need, Implement all measures, follow protocols/ guidelines to manage your OPD and operation theater to avoid contamination.

➢ **R:** Review the situation everyday and take appropriate steps, Rental agreement.

➢ **U:** Update yourself and the entire team and ensure (and document) guidelines that are to be followed.

➢ **S:** Staff management (special consent/agreement about job and salary, working hours, etc.), Social distancing, Sanitization, etc.

Chapter 41
How to Reset and Reboot Life During the COVID-19 Pandemic?

"In times of second deadly wave of COVID-19 pandemic, most of us often ask when the world will return to its normal days? As the lockdown restrictions are eased after first and second waves, the COVID-19 cases are also increasing, but there will also be rapid innovations in technology, service and processes to ensure that a "new normal" life continues despite the threats posed by COVID-19. It is important for us to not wait for normal days! We all need to assume that abnormal days are normal days! Today's abnormal normal is now our new normal! The world may not return to its old days; a wise person is the one who adapts to the changing world! All days are normal as long as you adjust yourself to the changes no matter how dramatic these changes are."

-Dr. Suresh K. Pandey

Prevention is better than cure — The significance of this everlasting quote cannot be questioned, especially, at a time when the whole world is fighting against the deadly COVID-19 pandemic. Many doctors and health care professionals have lost their lives while fighting against COVID-19. As entire India had recently faced second wave of COVID-19, senior health care professionals/doctors are doing medical consultation using virtual platforms or seeing a limited number of patients or are providing only emergency services.

In this chapter, I will be sharing several tips to reset, reboot your life and get adapted to the new normal during the COVID-19 period. If you are a medical student, resident, fellow, practicing doctor/health professional, here are nineteen ways to reset and reboot your life during the COVID-19 pandemic time. This can be summarized with the acronym of **CORONAVIRUS LOCKDOWN.**

C: *Change in Medical Practice and Get Adapted to the New Normal:* This is something that will be used by the medical equipment industry. For example, in the field of Ophthalmology, we have seen various new

modifications in widespread use like breath shields for slit lamps and indirect ophthalmoscopes and the industry has quickly ramped up its capability to manufacture Personal Protection Equipment (PPEs), masks, face shields and other safety devices. With an increase in production, thankfully the costs are also coming down, though the danger of poor quality equipment is also present. In the future, we are likely to see many innovations that will make it safer for doctors to examine patients. In Ophthalmology, for example, we will see slit lamps, where the distance between the patient and the ophthalmologist is considerably increased and surgical microscopes with some sort of cover for the patient's face that will reduce the chances of droplet infection.

C: *Change in Medical Practice: Get used to practicing with all precautions to prevent the COVID-19 infection. Innovate and follow new methods to minimize the safety of yourself, your family, staff members as well as patients.*

Connect with mentors, colleagues and friends within the medical profession or outside the medical profession by phone and by email or by video call and prepare yourself to adapt quickly for adopting the new normal. For the head of units/medical leaders/practice owners, it is also the time to communicate clearly and frequently with staff/team members and encourage them to stay positive and utilize the COVID-19 pandemic in the most productive way.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, I have communicated with most of our mentors, ophthalmic leaders, friends and colleagues in India and worldwide (John A. Moran Eye Center, Salt Lake City, USA, and Sydney Eye Hospital, Sydney, Australia) asking about their health and well-being. Most of our mentors and colleagues were very prompt in replying and also very happy to get reconnected.

O: Outline your plan to stay healthy and adapt to the "new normal" during the COVID-19 era.

O: *Organize your life, your home, your office and de-clutter storage.* Medical professionals require a full-time commitment and most of the high-volume doctors are very busy forcing themselves to allocate less time to organize their personal life. We have all got a disorganized office desk, a drawer chocked-full of paperwork that we have never had time to sift through and organize. Whether it is bills, receipts, doctor's prescriptions (about our own health), insurance or financial papers, utilize the lockdown time to turn that mountain into a molehill by sorting through. Apart from freeing up space

and de-cluttering our storage, we will get the added benefit of having all critical documents filed in one place so we are not turning the house upside down when we really need them. While sorting, if you come across important documents that you do not need a physical copy of, digitize them! Take a picture or scan them using free apps to convert them into PDFs. Store these on cloud-based storage platforms, so you have 24x7 access.

R: *Reboot your life, rejuvenate, refresh your skills, read books.* The bright side of the enforced limited mobility post COVID-19 pandemic is that the sky is bluer, the air/water is cleaner and lifestyle is going on in slow motion. Throughout our lives as medical doctors, we have been dreaming of such an atmosphere and peaceful existence. Prepare yourself to utilize this time now. Start your day with yoga/meditation, enjoy nature, read the books you always wanted to read, write or sing. The options are limitless. Above all, use this opportunity to re-establish the bond with your family, colleagues and friends. Family, friends and colleagues who were not getting attention due to your busy lifestyle and lack of time for them, make-up to them and make the time spent in their company memorable and joyous.

O: *Online meeting/Online Learning/Webinars have become the new normal now during the COVID-19 era.* The zoom meetings/e-CMEs/webinars/podcasts, etc. can help us to upgrade our knowledge and reconnect with leaders and colleagues. Indian Medical Association (IMA), Medical societies and the pharmaceutical industry are doing an excellent task in organizing various webinars that are being shared on the Facebook page and YouTube as well. Some of these meetings are generating more attendance than the real conferences. Also, one can always visit later and watch the presentation using the link via Facebook or YouTube platforms.

N: *New Normal:* COVID-19 has taken the entire world in its grip and the normal life as we knew it till now, is in complete disarray. Tele-consultation using online platforms is growing very fast as most patients are apprehensive of visiting hospitals for a routine health check-up. New vocabulary with words like lockdown, physical distancing, respiratory hygiene and Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) are becoming increasingly common in everyday life. However, normal is something that changes all the time; what was normal 10 years or even 50 years ago, is not normal today and this change is a continuous process. Just as we have had rapid changes in the last few decades, we will rapidly adapt to a new set of “normal” rules governing our

lives. In fact, times and crises like these accelerate many changes.

A: *Ask for help from seniors or mentors for any matter related to your professional career.* If you are depressed or are feeling low, connect with your friends or well-wishers and never hesitate to ask for help.

V: *Visualize your inner-self by engaging in mindful meditation, yoga, etc. Visualize your life,* your strength and your limitations, as well as visualize your last journey. Make plans to build your strength and overcome your limitations.

I: *Improve communication, improve your writing, oratory or interpersonal skills and indulge in a new hobby, such as cooking, gardening, painting, listening to music, etc.*

R: *Regulate your life by maintaining healthy food habits, a healthy lifestyle and healthy sleep habits.* It is not uncommon to see many colleagues posting a message on social media at odd hours during the late-night hours. This can lead to sleep disruption and disturbance of the biological clock. The negative impact of sleep disruption on immunity, mood and productivity is well known. Without the structure of having to get to the workplace, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy sleep habits like going to bed late and getting up late. Changes to our sleep cycle now could go on to impact our mood in the weeks and months ahead. Scheduling a balanced range of activities in our day—including physical exercise, connecting with others and pleasant and relaxing activities—can also help with our sleep quality. If the uncertainty of the current situation (for example, anxiety and depression) is causing you to lose sleep, talk about your worries with others rather than ruminating on them alone.

U: *Utilize self-time: During the coronavirus pandemic, all of us are getting ample time to be alone.* We need to utilize this as ‘me-time’ and reflect on our future goals, physical and mental health, career aspirations and more. Make plans for the next 6 weeks, 6 months and 6 years and write them down in a diary. Utilize this time in thinking about everything we want for ourselves, but usually don’t get the time to ponder over them.

S: *Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs):* The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that it is imperative for us to come up with standard protocols for handling important issues, to keep us safe from medico-legal liabilities. We are all looking to find a consensus on dealing

with issues like safety protocols to be followed, screening procedures for outpatient clinics, operating theatre safety measures and so on to reduce the spread of the novel Coronavirus. Most of the medical societies have been very active and they have been publishing and revising guidelines related to eye care during the pandemic. It is hoped that this will accelerate the process of finding common ground on such issues so that our Societies can come up with more SOPs on various topics that are practical and can be uniformly followed, which will protect the patients as well as ophthalmologists.

As we reboot our life, it is important to stay connected with your patients by virtual consultation and digital health platforms for follow-ups and spreading positivity and staying motivated. Advances in mobile technology mean that we can stay connected through calls, text, WhatsApp, email, etc. Use this time to get in contact with patients and people who may need your help. Connect with colleagues, well-wishers and contribute to a sense of togetherness that is going to be pivotal in our ability to cope, both now and in the weeks ahead. Try to connect with people who haven't heard from you in a while or people in our community who are likely to be isolated right now.

L: *Learn new things and let the creativity flow.* Is the piano/guitar/mouth organ that was bought a few years ago gathering dust in the closet? Take it out, dust it off. Take a YouTube tutorial and make it a habit to sit with family and practice for a few days. Learn to dance or sing using karaoke with family members and this exercise will boost your mood by the release of endorphins and other happiness hormones. Bring-out your inner Kishore Kumar or Lata Mangeshkar. You can share your performance with other professional colleagues on social media platforms. If you are not musically inclined, then utilize your time to cook a new dish or learn a new language through very decent language tutorials available online.

O: *Online Resources.* We can unlock the world by using so many online resources (related to any field) that are available to us. Young surgeons and residents-in-training can utilize this time and online resources to view surgical videos of routine and complex cases.

C: *Connect with sweet memories.* Going through old photo albums—and arranging them in the process— can bring us unbounded joy. Several studies have found that flipping through photo albums makes us significantly happier than chocolate, music, watching TV or drinking our favorite cocktail. The tests, carried out on three groups, compared their moods using the

aforementioned mood improvers, with those looking at their favorite photographs being the happiest. Sit with your old pictures one of these days to travel back in time and connect with happier, simpler days and share your old pictures with your kids and family members as well as with the rest of the world by sharing them on social media.

K: *Keep track of finances and discuss with your financial advisor how to save money to survive for a few months during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.* Financial planning is one of the most important aspects of such a situation.

Let us hope for the best but prepare for the worst.

D: *Digital Detox and Digital Housekeeping. A 'digital detox' or 'digital distancing'* refers to a period of time when a person refrains from using tech devices, such as smartphones, televisions, computers, tablets and social media sites. 'Detoxing' from digital devices is often seen as a way to focus on real-life social interactions without distractions. By forgoing digital devices, at least temporarily, one can let go of the stress that stems from constant connectivity. Use digital detox time for exercising, yoga and meditation. We need to do an activity for 21 days for it to become a habit. We can utilize this time for getting fitter, take up meditation, yoga or pilates, or join a functional workout class from home. Many yoga and meditation trainers are offering classes online at this time—follow them on their social media pages to find the best option. In addition to Digital Detox, we can spare some time for 'Digital House Keeping' by re-organizing the digital life, naming photos, surgical videos, old text files by putting them in the appropriate folder. It is important to check for a systems backup and updates of the operating system. Most important, we need to change our passwords and keep them safe.

O: *Outline plan for practice management/profession/ career.* Utilize this lockdown time to prepare a plan for practice management and career and future life. Staff training is very important to ensure every team member is fully trained about all precautions/ protocols, etc. to minimize transmission of COVID- 19 infection among each other and to patients.

W: *Write a letter to your future self, write an article, write a book.* The author have utilized the lockdown time to complete books as well as several articles related to new normal post-COVID-19 time.

I have completed two books entitled- *'Secrets of Successful Doctors: A complete guide fulfilling Medical Career' published by Maple Press* and *'A Hippocratic Odyssey: Lessons from a Doctor Couple on Life in Medicine, Challenges, and Doctorpreneurship',* published by Bloomsbury India**.** *Both books are* available on Amazon.

Encourage yourself and prepare yourself to face difficult times ahead. One may experience difficulty in focusing on work due to stress and anxiety. It may be a testing time for you, both personally and professionally. But think from a positive point of view and write a letter to your future self. Years from now, when you read the letter, you will feel happy that you survived a tough time without giving up. You need to watch your diet, your habits, sleep, time spent on digital platforms as you strive for balance. Avoid overeating, as for many people, boredom equates to eating, dislocation equates to eating and loneliness equates to eating too. It is important to be aware of it. Try to eat healthy and drink plenty of water.

N: *New normal, new focus, new opportunity, new life, new work style after COVID-19.* We need to get used to the new normal, see a new focus, a new opportunity, an innovative way to overcome the setback posed by the coronavirus. The whole world is going to have to take that approach when this is all over, but we can do it in our own lives now. Most people are becoming kinder and helping each other. There is a boom in volunteering to help others and there is an increased focus on hygiene, health, hospital and health awareness.

To summarize, the COVID-19 pandemic will reboot the entire world into virtual reality and after the crisis, work-from-home models are likely to continue and business travel is likely to be curtailed as virtual meetings have proved to be just as effective. Ultimately, the greatest lesson that COVID-19 can teach humanity is that we are all in this together, that what affects a single person anywhere affects everyone everywhere; that, as human beings, we need to think and act united rather than worrying about nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, economic status, education and such artificial groupings.

As we overcome the COVID-19 challenge and if we learn from our failings, we can build a brighter future than the one that is currently in store for us. Let us stay united, let us support each other and embrace this moment of upheaval as an opportunity to start investing in resilience, shared prosperity, well-being and planetary health. We have long exceeded our limits on natural

resources; it is time to try something new and innovative for our survival and prepare ourselves to deal with future calamities. Humans are resilient, entrepreneurial and will overcome challenges and are perfectly capable of beginning again.

Chapter 42
The Final Words

Taking a step towards starting your own independent medical practice is all about overcoming the uncertainties. It will enable you to grow your experience, your goals and change your lifestyle and will also give you inner satisfaction and accomplishment. From securing finances, finding the right location, to purchasing equipment and marketing your business – there is too much to do. It is not taught in the medical curriculum and can become overwhelming, especially if you don't have an established business background.

Determining what you want, what you need, and how you would achieve it are the first things you have to figure out. Fortunately, following all the steps highlighted in this book is based on the author's experience of starting a private practice (SuVi Eye Hospital & Lasik Laser Center) at Kota, Rajasthan and will help you in establishing your private clinic without feeling lost and overwhelmed. Once you understand each step and are aware of the things you need to do, you would smoothly handle the entire process.

Indeed, starting out a new medical practice is not going to be easy but if you are committed, consistent and are determined, you will soon not only start reaping the increasing number of satisfied patients and also the financial rewards, but you would also enjoy the amazing opportunities that come your way to growing professionally and personally.

The world of medicine as we know it is going through a sea change. The terrible COVID-19 pandemic has changed the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) of many if not most health care centers all over the world. Under the circumstances, we can state that the post-Coronavirus world will lay heavy emphasis on infectious diseases.

Hospitals and other health care service providers will pivot towards the containment and treatment of such illnesses. Even after taking vaccination, they will make sure that they have adequate Personal Protection Equipment (PPE suits) and other equipment (masks, sanitizers, gloves, etc.) to protect their staff as well as the health of the patients who visit such facilities. The

same will hold true even for private practices as well and the most well-prepared clinics will be the most successful ones in this new world.

Doctors will have more contactless interfaces and interactions and they will rely on digital support to ensure the safety of their staff and their patients.

Ultimately, the individuals who are able to make a seamless transition will be in the best position to take advantage of the opportunities present in this new environment.

The COVID-19 pandemic will transform the global health community's acceptance and use of digital health technologies. As health systems around the world are overwhelmed responding to COVID-19 while continuing to provide health care services, leaders are adopting technologies that only three months ago were on the sidelines of most health care systems.

As doctors, patients and home care providers turn to tele-medicine to reduce exposure to COVID-19, they are discovering that these virtual consultations are effective for triaging care, sharing critical guidance and providing emotional support. Dashboards for logistic management systems are improving the efficient deployment of essential resources — from hospital beds to PPE to, ultimately, vaccines. More advanced technologies including Artificial Intelligence (AI) are being employed to provide insights into complex questions of how individual behaviors impact transmission and identifying which policies are effective for specific groups. Maybe, these technologies will be what helps us to get closer to our shared goal of universal health coverage.

Part VII
Interesting Facts about Doctors and Medical Practice

National Doctors' Day in India and Other Countries

When the world is struggling to survive the COVID-19 pandemic, there is probably no better time to remember the 'national doctor' whose story is a mix of hard work, talent, a success despite racial discrimination, love for his homeland and an unmatched dedication towards his profession. India celebrates July 1 as 'National Doctor's Day' commemorating the iconic and internationally renowned medical practitioner, Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy who served as a physician, a freedom fighter, an educationist and a politician.

Doctors' Day is celebrated on different dates in different countries and falls on 1 July in India. Doctors' Day recognizes the contribution of the legendary physician, freedom fighter, the former Chief Minister of West Bengal and a person who lived a life serving others—Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy. He was born on 1 July 1882 and died on the same date in 1962, aged 80. Dr Roy was honored with the country's highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna, on 4 February 1961. National Doctor's Day was started by the Government of India in 1991 as a mark of respect to the great physician, Dr. B.C. Roy.

In other countries, the doctor's day is celebrated on different days, such as in Brazil, it is celebrated on 18th October, while in USA, it is celebrated on 30th March, in Cuba on December 3 and in Iran on August 23.

Reference: Pandey, S.K., Sharma, V. July 1 is National Doctors' Day: How to regain the lost public trust in healthcare? *Indian J Ophthalmol* 2018; 66: 1045-6.

The Highest and the Lowest Paid Doctors

The highest annual salaries were $313,000 for US physicians; $163,000 for German physicians and $138,000 for doctors in the United Kingdom. Mexico had the lowest-paid doctors ($22,000), followed by Brazil ($58,000). According to *Medscape*, the highest-paying specialty in 2019 in the USA is orthopedics at $482,000, while the lowest-paying specialty is the public health and preventive medicine at $209,000.

The average salary of a doctor can be an important consideration when you are deciding what field you want to specialize in or whether you want to pursue a medical degree. There are many factors to weigh when considering specialties, and knowing about how much money you might make can help with financial planning, giving you a good estimate of when you can expect to pay off your medical school loans.

The Doctor wage gap between male doctors and female doctors

Paralleling a national trend across all fields, there exists a national gender pay gap in medicine. The Doximity 2019 Physician Compensation Report reported on the incomes of doctors in USA metro areas, finding that male physicians earned an average of $1.25 for every $1 female physicians earned in 2018. Medscape reported a similar trend nationwide, finding that male specialists earned 33% more than female specialists and that male Primary Care Physicians (PCPs) earned 25% more. The gap appears to be narrowing each year, however. According to Doximity, compensation for male physicians has stagnated but increased for women by two percent over the last year.

COVID-19’s impacts on a physician’s income

Sharing information from news stories and other reports released by organizations such as MGMA, Medscape’s report notes that many physicians have seen a significant financial fallout as a result of COVID-19:

- Practices reported an average 55% decrease in revenue and a 60% drop in patient volume on average since the beginning of the crisis.
- Nine percent of independent practices reported closing their practices, at least temporarily.
- Remote patient care engagement rose by 225%.
- In March alone, 43,000 health care workers were laid off.

It goes on to say that specialties that rely on elective procedures saw the largest amount of lost business. Some of those specialties include: Orthopedics, plastic surgery, Dermatology, Cardiology and Ophthalmology.

Reference: *Medscape Physician Compensation Report, 2020*

Surgeons Who Play Video Games are More Skilled, According to a Study

Playing video games appears to help surgeons with skills that truly count: how well they operate using a precise technique, according to a study published in the Archives of Surgery. There was a strong correlation between video game skills and a surgeon's capabilities of performing laparoscopic surgeries in the study published in the February 2007 issue of Archives of Surgery. Laparoscopy and related surgeries involve manipulating instruments through a small incision or body opening where the surgeon's movements are guided by watching a television screen. Video game skills translated into higher scores on a day-and-half-long surgical skills test and the correlation was much higher than the surgeon's length of training or prior experience in laparoscopic surgery, the study said. Out of 33 surgeons from Beth Israel Medical Center in New York, USA that participated in the study, nine doctors who had at some point played video games at least three hours per week made 37 percent fewer errors, performed 27 percent faster and scored 42 percent better in the test of surgical skills than the 15 surgeons who had never played video games before. "It was surprising that past commercial video gameplay was such a strong predictor of advanced surgical skills," according to Iowa State University Psychology Professor Douglas Gentile, one of the study's authors. It supports previous research that video games can improve "fine motor skills, eye-hand coordination, visual attention, depth perception and computer competency," as mentioned by the authors.

Reference**:** *Arch Surg. 2007 Feb;142(2):181-6; discusssion 186.*

doi: 10.1001/archsurg.142.2.181.

Surgeons are Taller and More Handsome than Physicians, Finds a Study Published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ)

Doctors at the University of Barcelona Hospital, Spain noticed that the tallest and most handsome male students were more likely to go for surgery and the shortest (and perhaps not so good looking) ones were more likely to become physicians. So they decided to test the theory that, on average, surgeons are taller and better looking than physicians.

They selected a random sample of 12 surgeons and 12 physicians from the hospital plus four external controls (well-known film stars who played surgeons or physicians). All subjects were matched by age (52 +/- 7 years) and sex (all men), their height was recorded and they were asked to submit a digital picture.

Pictures of all subjects were then randomly organized and shown to an independent group of eight female observers (all in the same age group as the study subjects). Observers used the "good looking score" to classify each participant (ranging from 1, ugly to 7, very good looking).

The results showed that, on average, senior male surgeons are significantly taller and better looking than senior male physicians. They also show that film stars who play doctors are significantly better looking than real surgeons and physicians.

There are several potential explanations for these findings, say the authors. For example, surgeons spend a lot of time in operating rooms, which are cleaner, cooler and have a higher oxygen content than the average medical ward, where physicians spend most of their time. They also often wear clog-type shoes that add 2-3 cm to their perceived height.

In contrast, physicians have a tendency to hang heavy stethoscopes around their necks, which bows their heads forward and reduces their perceived height.

Further studies are needed to assess if these findings also apply to junior male surgeons and physicians as well as to senior and junior female staff, they add.

Reference: *BMJ. 2006 Dec 23; 333(7582): 1291–1293.*

The Life Expectancy of Doctors is 59 Years As Compared To 67.9 Years of An Average Person in India

Doctors are expected to live longer as they know more about how to stay fit and healthy and address the medical conditions ahead of time. Despite this, the possibility of heart diseases and cancer among doctors is swiftly rising. Also, the emerging trend of doctors committing suicide—which was hitherto uncommon—is a matter of grave concern. This shocking revelation made by the Indian Medical Association (IMA) demands that this matter be studied thoroughly and that core causes are identified to know what has pushed down the life expectancy of doctors by more than 10 years. The 10-year-long study conducted by the Indian Medical Association for Kerala interviewed 10,000 doctors. During the study, 282 doctors died, 87% of them were male physicians and 13% females. When the reason for death was investigated, 27% had died due to heart diseases, 25% due to cancer, 2% by infection, and 1% by committing suicide. The respondents mentioned stress as the major contributor to early deaths, followed by a lack of periodic health checkups. According to the Indian Medical Association's research, deskbound job and inactive lifestyle, lack of exercise, stress and obesity are primary instigators of heart diseases in the medical fraternity. Although the risk of heart diseases increases with age, doctors avoid having a regular medical checkup and tend to rely on self-diagnosis and treatment. This often results in severe outcome in the form of sudden heart attacks that can cause the loss of life even in a young age group. Many doctors are uncomfortable getting treatment from fellow physicians. This practice is especially prevalent in the regime of mental health. Categorized as "VIP syndrome," doctors are held back from the required treatment due to their concerns about confidentiality and reservations pertinent to therapy or treatment effectiveness. Lehman studied physician depression and stress and claimed that if only doctors receive immediate treatment and confidential hospitalization, the death ratio can be decreased substantially. In addition to cardiac diseases, cancer is an important cause of premature death of doctors because of the fact that they are more exposed to the environmental factors that promote the risk of cancer in individuals. Working in a setting with exposure to diverse carcinogens (ionizing radiations) can fuel the possible occurrence of thyroid and ovary

cancers. Another problem more relevant for surgeons/ophthalmologists is the work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMD) caused by spending long hours using the operating microscope or slit lamp. While this may not directly contribute to early death, it does cause health concerns like strain, backache, neck pain, carpal-tunnel syndrome, etc. and compromises the quality of life. Small ergonomic modifications, prophylactic neck and back exercises and timely professional consultation may help alleviate symptoms and maintain better work efficiency.

Reference: *Pandey SK, Sharma V. Doctor, Heal Thyself: Addressing the Shorter Life Expectancy of Doctors in India. Indian J Ophthalmol [serial online] 2019;67:1248-50.*

The Five Most Common Medical Malpractice Claims Reported in USA

While most doctors and nurses do their best to provide their patients with quality care, mistakes still happen. In some cases, these mistakes have life-altering consequences for the patient. If a patient is not correctly treated, the medical professional may be liable for further injury. This is the list of the most common medical malpractice claims in USA according to an online report.

1. Misdiagnosis and Failure to Diagnose

In USA, nearly 12 million people are misdiagnosed in an outpatient setting each year. Misdiagnosis is common because some illnesses have obscure symptoms or may share symptoms with another illness and are therefore more difficult to diagnose. Without a proper diagnosis, it's nearly impossible for a doctor to implement a successful treatment plan. Diagnostic errors harm patients as they lead to delays in treatment, lack of treatment and even death. Extended hospital stays and expensive, unnecessary treatments can also create an insurmountable financial burden.

2. Prescription Errors

Prescription drug errors occur when a patient is given the wrong medication, wrong dosage or not made fully aware of the side effects. Many prescription drug errors go unreported by patients. Any number of medical professionals, including doctors, pharmacists and drug manufacturers could be held responsible for prescription mistakes.

3. Childbirth Errors

Nearly 20 percent of all medical malpractice suits are filed against obstetrics and gynecology practitioners, more than any other type of doctor. Negligence during childbirth can lead to complications such as fetal distress, spinal cord injuries and postpartum hemorrhage (which is the number one cause of maternal death after delivery).

4. Surgical Errors

Surgical errors can include many different complications, such as incorrect incision site, wrong surgery site or leaving a foreign object (like a surgical sponge) inside the body. While some surgical errors are the result of a

surgeon’s error, most are the result of poor preoperative planning. These mistakes can lead to infections, lifelong damage and death.

5. Anesthesia Errors

Anesthesia can be dangerous if not administered properly. If an anesthesiologist doesn’t focus enough attention on a patient’s medical history or gives too much anesthesia, the consequences could be deadly. These errors aren’t relegated to operating rooms only. Anesthesia malpractice can happen in pre-op and recovery rooms, during sedation for dental procedures and other outpatient operations.

Reference: *https://cochranfirm.com/five-common-medical-malpractice-claims/*

The WHO Safe Surgery Checklist

With a view to eliminate preventable medical errors, the WHO designed the **Surgical Safety Checklist** after it was discovered that many errors in the operating rooms were preventable. The checklist consists of safety checks designed to safeguard and improve the performance of the them in the operating room.

Team Briefing: All the members of the surgical team are required to attend a team briefing in the beginning to ensure that the requirements are understood as well as skill levels, staffing and equipment requirements are identified, and to also plan for any expected problems.

Sign In: The period before the administration of the anaesthesia enables the team to check the surgical site on the patient's body to ensure that it has been properly marked and all known allergies of the patient have been checked.

Time Out: Before making the first incision the entire team present in the theatre should introduce themselves, if it has not been already done. This encourages those present to identify any concerns at this stage.

Sign Out: Before the patient leaves the theatre, the team needs to ensure that instruments, sponges and needles have been accounted for to confirm that nothing has been left inside the patient's body.

Debriefing: All the members of the surgical team need to be a part of a final discussion at the end of the procedure to discuss the positives, the issues, the concerns and identify areas of improvement.

Reference: *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WHO_Surgical_Safety_Checklist*

India’s Medical Error Deaths, Nearly 5 Million a Year, Can Be Cut By 50% by Adapting the Acute Critical Care Course

With nearly 5,000,000 Indians dying due to medical negligence every year, experts claim that a specialized course for doctors and hospital staff focusing on how a critically ill or injured patient should be handled could bring down the figure by almost 50 percent. The Acute Critical Care Course (ACCC), developed in the early 1980s in Europe, has come as a boon for medical institutions abroad by reducing the death rate of patients by nearly 10 percent, even in serious health complications including sepsis. The two-day course has become mandatory for surgical trainees both in the USA and the UK, which annually lose over 400,000 and 98,000 patients, respectively, due to medical errors.

A study by Harvard University last year showed that nearly 5,000,000 deaths occur in India annually due to medical errors triggered by a lack of practical knowledge among the doctors and nurses to handle patients when brought to the hospital. The ACCC aims to train the medical specialists and the surgeons of various specializations such as surgical, gynecology, orthopedics and emergency to suspect and identify patients at risk of deterioration. Implementing the course in Indian hospitals, especially in rural areas, can bring down the mortality rates due to medical negligence by nearly 50 percent. The comprehensive course includes imparting training to the new and existing doctors of a hospital receiving critical care patients either on a high fidelity simulation or preserved dead bodies to make them understand the crucial steps to prevent errors. The ACCC is an initiative specially designed for those hospitals where doctors do not have practical knowledge about handling patients that require critical care. The deteriorating health of most of the patients can be identified well in time if the residents are trained in how to use simple principles of applied physiology. Timely steps and following checklist system are much more effective than last-minute heroic measures. This course takes care of the prevention of small mistakes that make it life-threatening for the patient, be it administering IV fluids in patients, minor surgeries or anything else.

***Reference*:** *https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-*

affairs/india-s-medical-error-deaths-nearly-5-mn-a-year-can-be-cut-by-50-expert-118102800193_1.html

Medical Litigation Cases in India go up by 400%, show Statistics

A recent survey carried out by the National Law School of India University (NLSIU), Bengaluru, pointed out four reasons for the rise in medical litigation in India. These include greater consumer awareness, flexible consumer forums, the cost involved in medical services and litigant mindset among the populace, according to an article published by the distance education department and CEERA, NLSIU, Bengaluru.

There is a steady increase in the cases of medical litigation in the country. General surgery, Obstetrics and Orthopedics are three medical specialities with the highest number of consumer cases. Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of their rights, duties and responsibilities and are ready to fight out any deficiency in service delivery mechanisms. Flexibility and ease provided by consumer forums to file a complaint before the consumer courts too, have aided this trend. Unlike moving a regular civil court to file a case, consumers can now do so with ease in a consumer court. There are instances of consumers arguing their case themselves rather than through advocates. With the rising cost of health care, expectations from the medical institutions are also growing, adding that they tend to cry negligence for the smallest of deficiency in service delivery. In addition, the basic mindset of the Indian public is to 'litigate.' They are not averse to moving the courts seeking justice. Doctors are literally in the dock because of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986. Noting that the courts are jammed with cases of medical negligence and this is not a welcome sign and this matter has come to a stage where doctors - both newcomers and seniors - are wary of treating complex cases lest they are charged with negligence. As per statistics from the research registry, the cases of medical negligence have gone up by 400% in the last decade. Noting that the trust between patients and doctors is waning, high compensation too has made doctors and medical institutions wary. While advocating punishment for negligent doctors, that the focus should be on quality patient care.

***Reference*:**

https://health.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/industry/medical-litigation-cases-go-up-by-400-show-stats/50062328

Medical Error is the Third Leading Cause of Death in the United States, after Heart Disease & Cancer

A study released in 2016 found medical error as the third leading cause of death in the United States, after heart disease and cancer. Researchers looked at studies that analyzed the medical death rate data from 2000 to 2008 and extrapolated that over 250,000 deaths per year had stemmed from a medical error, which translates to 9.5% of all deaths annually in USA.

A medical error is a preventable adverse effect of care ("iatrogenesis"), whether or not it is evident or harmful to the patient. This might include an inaccurate incomplete diagnosis or treatment of a disease, injury, syndrome, behavior, infection or other ailments. Globally, it is estimated that 142,000 people died in 2013 from adverse effects of medical treatment; this is an increase from 94,000 in 1990. However, a 2016 study of the number of deaths that were a result of medical errors in the US placed the yearly death rate in the US alone at 251,454 deaths, which suggests that the 2013 global estimation may not be accurate. Globally, it is estimated that 142,000 people died in 2013 from adverse effects of medical treatment; in 1990, the number was 94,000. According to recent medical malpractice statistics, in the United States, at least 250,000 people have died annually of medical errors and negligence.

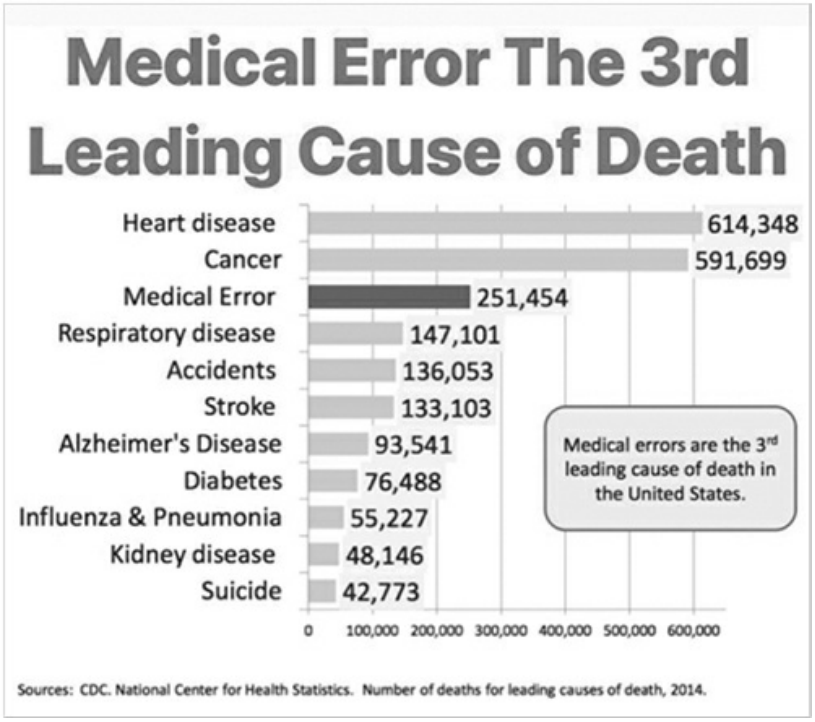
A 2000 Institute of Medicine report estimated that medical errors result in between 44,000 and 98,000 preventable deaths and 1,000,000 excess injuries each year in US hospitals. In the UK, a 2000 study found that an estimated 850,000 medical errors occur each year, costing over £2 billion.

Some researchers questioned the accuracy of the IOM study, criticizing the statistical handling of measurement errors in the report, significant subjectivity in determining which deaths were "avoidable" or due to medical error and an erroneous assumption that 100% of patients would have survived if optimal care had been provided. A 2001 study in the Journal of the American Medical Association of seven Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers estimated that for roughly every 10,000 patients admitted to the select hospitals, one patient died who would have lived for three months or more in good cognitive health had "optimal" care been provided.

A 2006 follow-up to the IOM study found that medication errors are among the most common medical mistakes, harming at least 1.5 million people every year. According to the study, 400,000 preventable drug-related injuries occur each year in hospitals, 800,000 in long-term care settings and roughly 530,000 among Medicare recipients in outpatient clinics. The report stated that these are likely to be conservative estimates. In 2000 alone, the extra medical costs incurred by preventable drug-related injuries approximated $887 million—and the study looked only at injuries sustained by Medicare recipients, a subset of clinic visitors. None of these figures take into account lost wages and productivity or other costs.

According to a 2002 Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality report, about 7,000 people were estimated to die each year from medication errors – about 16 percent more deaths than the number attributable to work-related injuries (6,000 deaths). Medical errors affect one in 10 patients worldwide. One extrapolation suggests that 180,000 people die each year partly as a result of iatrogenic injury. One in five Americans (22%) report that they or a family member have experienced a medical error of some kind.

The World Health Organization registered 14 million new cases and 8.2 million cancer-related deaths in 2012. It is estimated that the number of cases could increase by 70% through 2032. As the number of cancer patients receiving treatment increases, hospitals around the world are seeking ways to improve patient safety, to emphasize traceability and raise efficiency in their cancer treatment processes.


Medical Error The 3rd Leading Cause of Death
Heart disease 614,348
Cancer 591,699
Medical Error 251,454
Respiratory disease 147,101
Accidents 136,053
Stroke 133,103
Alzheimer's Disease 93,541
Diabetes 76,488
Influenza & Pneumonia 55,227
Kidney disease 48,146
Suicide 42,773
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Medical errors are the 3rd leading cause of death in the United States.
Sources: CDC. National Center for Health Statistics. Number of deaths for leading causes of death, 2014.

Reference:https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medical_error#:~:text=A%202000%

Doctors and Divorce

Doctors are less likely than other health professionals to be divorced.

The largest investigation of divorce rates among physicians has made what may be a surprising finding: Doctors are actually less likely ever to be divorced than people in other occupations, including lawyers, nurses and other health care professionals.

The study, published online in The BMJ (formerly The British Medical Journal), did find that female physicians had a greater likelihood of being divorced than did male physicians, particularly those female physicians who worked longer hours.

It has been speculated that doctors are more likely to be divorced than other professionals because of the long hours they keep and the stress associated with the job, but no large-scale study has ever investigated whether that is true. According to the report, doctors have among the lowest rates of divorce among health care professionals. For those entering medicine, who are concerned about how their career choice might impact their personal lives, the findings of the report should be reassuring.

Previous studies finding higher divorce rates among physicians were conducted in small, non-representative samples, some at a single institution, according to the authors. Those studies were published three or more decades ago; since then, the overall USA divorce rate has dropped more than 25 percent. To get a more complete picture of how the divorce rate among physicians compares with that of other occupations, the authors analyzed data from the American Community Survey, an annual survey of around 3 million households conducted by the US Census Bureau.

Survey results from 2008 through 2013 included responses from more than 40,000 physicians, 200,000 other health professionals—dentists, pharmacists, nurses and health care executives and more than 6 million other adults who reported currently being employed and ever being married. While 24 percent of physician respondents had ever been divorced, the probability of being divorced was 25 percent among dentists, 31 percent among health care executives and 33 percent among nurses. Only pharmacists, at 23 percent, were less likely than physicians to have been divorced. Lawyers had a 27 percent probability of being divorced and in all non-health-care occupations,

the probability of ever being divorced was 35 percent.

Female physicians were approximately one-and-a-half times more likely to be divorced than male physicians of a similar age. And while female physicians who reported working more than 40 hours per week had a higher probability of ever being divorced than did those working fewer hours, the apparent impact of hours worked on divorce incidence was the opposite for males, among whom working more than 40 hours a week was associated with a lower incidence of divorce.

The higher incidence of divorce among female physicians stems from the greater trade-offs they are forced to make to achieve work/life balance. More research is needed to understand whether that interpretation is indeed accurate and if it is, what can be done to help with work/life balance.

Reference: https://hms.harvard.edu/news/doctors-divorce

https://www.bmj.com/content/350/bmj.h706

The Most Common Objects Left Inside a Patient during Surgery are Needles and Sponges

When undergoing surgery, most patients do not consider that they could leave the hospital with foreign objects in their bodies. Research studies indicate that thousands of incidents (4,500 to 6,000) of this type happen each year in the United States alone. Retained surgical instruments after surgery can cause a number of serious health issues and may even lead to death. Leaving foreign objects in a patient's body is a mistake that could be avoided with the implementation of extra safety precautions.

Objects Commonly Left Inside the Body after Surgery: Depending on the type of surgery, surgeons are estimated to use over 250 types of surgical instruments and tools during a single procedure. These objects are difficult to keep track of during surgery and are sometimes left behind. The types of surgical objects commonly left inside a patient after surgery include sponges, scalpels, scissors, towels, drain tips, needles, guide wires, clamps, tweezers, forceps, scopes, surgical masks, measuring devices, surgical gloves, tubes, etc.

The most common objects left inside a patient are needles and sponges. Sponges, in particular, are difficult to keep track of as they are used to soak up blood during surgery and tend to blend in with the patient's organs and tissues. These incidences happen most often during abdominal surgery. The most common areas in which surgical objects are left inside a patient are the abdomen, vagina and the chest cavity.

Why Objects get Left Behind?

Surgical objects are unintentionally left inside a patient for a number of reasons. Hospitals typically rely on nurses or technicians to keep track of the number of sponges and other surgical tools used during surgery. Human error comes into play as incorrect counts can be made due to fatigue or chaos as a result of a surgical emergency. Several factors can increase the risk that an object may be left behind after surgery. These factors include unexpected changes that occur during surgery, the patient's body mass index is high, multiple procedures are needed, procedures involving more than one surgical team and procedures involving greater blood loss.

Consequences of Leaving Objects Behind

The consequences of having surgical tools left inside a patient's body vary from harmless to fatal. Patients may go for months or years not realizing that they have foreign surgical objects within their bodies. Sponges and other surgical implements can lead to infection, severe pain, digestive system problems, fever, swelling, internal bleeding, damage to internal organs, obstructions, loss of part of an internal organ, prolonged hospital stays, additional surgery to remove the object or even death.

Cases of Objects Left Inside Patients

Examples of surgical objects being left inside patients include:

- A patient in a Wisconsin hospital was undergoing cancer surgery and a 13-inch surgical retractor was left inside his abdomen.
- A six-inch metal surgical clamp was left in a man's abdomen (behind his liver) following intestinal surgery in California. Even more astonishing is that this was the second time that a clamp was left inside this same patient after surgery.
- Surgical scissors was left inside a woman who had undergone uterine cancer surgery.
- A surgical glove was left inside a woman who had undergone a hysterectomy.
- A two-inch scalpel was left inside the abdomen of a man who was having heart bypass surgery.

What are the Prevention Methods?

Large surgical instruments are not commonly left inside patients. Retained surgical sponges make up the vast majority of objects left behind after surgery. Some hospitals use sponge-tracking technology to ensure that these items are detected and not left inside a patient. The sponges are bar-coded and scanned when they are used to reduce the risk of an inaccurate count. They are scanned again after surgery to ensure that there are no discrepancies. Another type of sponge-tracking technology involves radio-frequency tagged sponges and towels. These items can be detected by an x-ray while the patient is still in the operating room. Hospitals that use these types of surgical object tracking methods have reported a drastic reduction in the rate of reported retained surgical objects. Adopting sponge-tracking technology has also proven to be more cost-effective for hospitals than

having to perform additional surgeries on patients to remove retained surgical objects.

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- *Williams, T. Tung, D. et al. "Retained Surgical Sponges: Findings from Incident Reports and a Cost-Benefit Analysis of Radiofrequency Technology". J Am Coll Surg. 2014 Sep;219(3):354-64. doi: 10.1016/j.jamcollsurg.2014.03.052. Epub 2014 May 10.*

Primum non nocere (First do no harm)

No medical saying is better known than ‘First do no harm’ or to use the Latin phrase, ‘Primum non nocere.’ PubMed shows that there are currently 393 articles with ‘do no harm’ in the title. Contrary to popular belief, the phrase does not appear in the Hippocratic Oath or the Hippocratic Corpus (Hippocrates wrote in Greek, not Latin). Rather the saying is attributed to Thomas Inman, as recently as 1860. That same year, Oliver Wendell Holmes Senior famously remarked in a lecture to the Massachusetts Medical Society, ‘If the whole materia medica, as now used, could be sunk to the bottom of the sea, it would be all the better for mankind—and all the worse for the fishes.’ He observed that the injuries caused by over-medication were often masked by the disease. ‘First do no harm’ remains an important injunction against over-treatment.

Reference: https://www.bmj.com/content/347/bmj.f6426

Defensive Medicine and Consumer-Driven Health Care

Defensive medicine is defined as the ordering of tests, procedures and visits and/or referrals or avoidance of high-risk patients or procedures, primarily to reduce malpractice liability. A study from Israel revealed that defensive medicine is prevalent, especially among surgical specialties and more so among those exposed to lawsuits. Studies have revealed that defensive medicine is a well-known practice in industrialized countries and is increasingly becoming common in developing nations. According to a recent national physicians' survey by Jackson Healthcare, USA's third largest health care staffing agency, 75 percent of doctors say that they order more tests, procedures and medicines than are medically necessary in an attempt to avoid lawsuits. Gallup reports that one in four health care dollars spent in health care can be attributed to defensive medicine, that is, about $ 650 billion annually. These costs are passed along to everyone, significantly driving up health insurance premiums, taxes to cover public health insurance programs, co-pays and out of pocket costs.

***Reference*:** *https://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2013/08/27 defensive-medicine-a-cure-worse-than-the-disease/"\l"1419d0777c95"*

https://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2013/08/27/defensive-medicine-a-cure-worse-than-the-disease/#1419d0777c95

Forty Percent of Female Doctors Leave the Medical Profession Within 6 Years

A study conducted by the University of Michigan, USA, found that almost 40 percent of women physicians go part-time or leave medicine altogether within six years of completing their residencies. That stinks for the women who worked so hard—and have spent so much money—on medical training for a career they were passionate about. But it also stinks for patients. Patients seen by female doctors have better outcome than those seen by male doctors.

A study of 1.5 million Medicare patients admitted to the hospital found those treated by women were significantly less likely to die or be readmitted within the next 30 days. Patients operated on by female surgeons are also less likely to die within the next 30 days.

Reference: *JAMA Network Open. 2019;2(8):e198340. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2019.8340*

Doctors’ Suicide Rate Highest in Any Profession

One doctor commits suicide in USA every day—the highest suicide rate of any profession. And the number of doctor suicides—28 to 40 per 100,000—is more than twice that of the general population, new research shows. The rate in the general population is 12.3 per 100,000.

Doctors who die by suicide often have untreated or under-treated depression or other mental illnesses, a fact that underscores the need for early diagnosis and treatment, according to a study of the psychiatric program at Harlem Hospital Center in New York, USA. It’s very surprising that the suicide rate among physicians is higher than among those in the military, which is considered a very stressful occupation. Although female doctors attempt suicide far less often than women in the general population, their completion rate exceeds that of the general population by 2.5 to 4 times. It also equals the completion rate of male doctors.

The study shows that some of the most common diagnoses are mood disorders, alcoholism and substance abuse. One study showed that depression affects an estimated 12 percent of male doctors and up to 19.5 percent of female doctors, a rate similar to the general population. Depression is more common in medical students and residents. A new study showed that poisoning and hanging are among the most common means of doctor suicide. The findings also suggest that having knowledge and access to potentially lethal substances account for the higher rate of suicide completion in doctors.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further escalated stress and burnout among health care workers. Before COVID-19, 43% of physicians and 54% of primary care physicians in the United States reported symptoms of burnout. Approximately 70% of Chinese health care workers surveyed in the spring of 2020 met diagnostic criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder, 50% met criteria for major depressive disorder, and 45% met criteria for generalized anxiety disorder. Dr. Lorna Breen, an emergency medicine physician in New York City, committed suicide in April 2020 not long after sharing with family the heartbreaking stories of working in the pandemic's epicenter.

The devastating, relentless crisis of physician suicide demands immediate action. Physicians deserve easy access to confidential mental health services.

Family physicians should unfailingly apply the principles of care outlined by Norris and Clark to our colleague-patients. Telehealth technologies can ease scheduling constraints and maximize confidentiality. Honest discussions about our profession's challenges should begin on the first day of medical school. Insurance policies and accreditation boards need to abolish care-seeking penalties. Health system leaders should promote practice environments that minimize administrative burdens and offer early intervention to mitigate burnout. Physician organizations should collaboratively monitor physician well-being. We must all work together to mobilize mental health care resources for our colleagues—and ourselves—against the backdrop of the COVID-19 catastrophe.

Reference: ***https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/news/20180508/doctors-suicide-rate highest-of-any-profession\l***

https://www.aafp.org/afp/2021/0401/p396.html

Doctors Interrupt Patients, Stop Listening After 11 Seconds on Average, According to a Study

Doctors only spend 11 seconds on average listening to patients before interrupting them, according to a new study. A team of scientists from the United States and Mexico studied clinical encounters between patients and physicians to test shared decision-making tools. Published in the Journal of General Internal Medicine, the scientists learned of the lack of attention many doctors provide their patients. “Our results suggest that we are far from achieving patient-centered care,” according to the author of the study. The scientists analyzed 112 recorded meetings between doctors and patients at general practices in Minnesota and Wisconsin, including at the Mayo Clinic and its affiliated clinics.

The scientists learned doctors only spent 11 seconds on average listening to a patient describe their reasons for visiting before interrupting. The team only counted how long it took a doctor to interrupt if the doctor first said something like “What can I do for you today?” or “Tell me what brings you in today,” allowing the patients to set the agenda of the conversation. “If done respectfully and with the patient’s best interest in mind, interruptions to the patient’s discourse may clarify or focus the conversation, and thus benefit patients,”. “Yet, it seems rather unlikely that an interruption, even to clarify or focus, could be beneficial at the early stage in the encounter. The study found that 67 percent of patients were interrupted after responding and only 36 percent of doctors even ask questions that invited patients to direct the focus of the conversation. Specialists allowed even less time than primary care doctors, potentially because specialists are often briefed on the reason for the visit beforehand. In primary care visits, 49 percent of patients were able to explain their agenda, while in specialty visits, only 20 percent of patients were allowed to explain their reason for visiting. For specialty care visits, eight out of 10 patients were interrupted even if they were allowed to share their agenda. The median appointment length was 30 minutes, but appointments were longer when patients were allowed to explain their reason for visiting at the start of the conversation than appointments where patients were not given the opportunity.

There could be many reasons that many doctors haven’t been allowing patients to speak, including a lack of communication training, time

constraints or burnout, researchers say. The scientists hope that future studies might reveal if allowing a patient to speak longer would positively affect the outcome of the visit.

***Reference*:** *https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11606-018-4711-4*

Who are the Happiest and Most Burned Out Doctors?

More than half of U.S. doctors are burned out—but certain specialties are suffering more than others, according to *Medscape*'s Lifestyle survey. *Medscape* surveyed more than 14,000 doctors from over 30 specialties, who were asked about a range of topics, including burnout and bias against patients. The survey also collected demographic data such as gender, race, and ethnicity.

The state of burnout: The survey defined burnout as having feelings of cynicism, a low sense of personal accomplishment, and a loss of enthusiasm for work.

How engaged are your clinicians? The survey found that the overall rate of physician burnout in 2017 was 51 percent, significantly higher than 2013's rate of 40 percent. More female physicians (55 percent) than male physicians (45 percent) said they were burned out, but the survey found that burnout appears to be leveling off in both women and men. The burnout rate varied by specialty, with the highest rates of burnout reported among physicians practicing:

- Emergency medicine (59 percent);
- Obstetrics and gynecology (56 percent); and
- Family medicine, internal medicine, and infectious disease specialties (tied with 55 percent).

Meanwhile, the lowest rates of burnout were reported among physicians practicing:

- Diabetes and endocrinology (46 percent);
- Pathology, ophthalmology, and allergy and immunology (tied with 43 percent); and
- Psychiatry and mental health (42 percent).

Different specialties also reported different levels of burnout severity. For instance, although infectious disease specialists ranked in the top five for overall rates of burnout, they reported the lowest severity of burnout on a seven-point scale (3.9). The specialties that reported the most severe burnout were:

- Urology (4.6);
- Otolaryngology (4.5); and
- Oncology (4.5).

When physicians were asked to rate individual causes of burnout on a seven-point scale that ranged from "does not contribute at all" to "significantly contributes," doctors said the leading causes of burnout were:

- Too many bureaucratic tasks (5.3);
- Spending too many hours at work (4.7); and
- Feeling like just a cog in a wheel (4.6).

Happiness at work: The survey also asked providers about their happiness at work. The survey found that the highest rates of physicians reporting being "happy" or "very happy" at work were seen among:

- Dermatologists (43 percent);
- Ophthalmologists (42 percent); and
- Allergy and immunology specialists (41 percent).

The lowest happiness rates were seen among:

- Emergency medicine specialists (28 percent);
- Nephrologists (24 percent); and
- Rheumatologists (24 percent).

Reference: *https://www.advisory.com/daily-briefing/2017/01/13/burnt-out-doctors*

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Changing Face of Medical Practice & How to Respond to These Changes:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKrTTjJGvK4

Social Media and Medical Tourism—The World at Your Fingertips:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SO233GCcLZk

Aggression and Violence Against Doctors: How to Address Confronting Situations:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7MnbqHMZXE

Career Choice for Young Doctors Today:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8yinKmTSZM

Overseas Medical Training:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CCo2CWpwIU

How to Start New Medical Practice:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sj_JcNrKF6g

Dawn and Dusk in the Life of Doctor:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=euqT7io6jr4

Praise from the Global Medical Pioneers

Dr. Lucio Buratto, Italy

'Entrepreneurship for Doctors: How to Build Your Own Successful Medical Practice?' provides insight into the complexities faced by the medical professionals at various stages of medical career. This book is a timely contribution to enlighten medical students, practicing doctors and medical professionals about the changing trends in medical practice and how to respond to them. I congratulate Dr. Suresh K. Pandey on this excellent treatise that will be helpful for young doctors to start the medical practice and to strengthen doctor-patient trust.

Dr. Vikram Shah, Director, Shalby Multispeciality Hospital, Ahmedabad, India

I congratulate Dr. Suresh K Pandey for bringing out this excellent book 'Entrepreneurship for Doctors: How to Build Your Own Successful Medical Practice?.' This book addresses the step by step journey of a doctor to become a doctorpreneur. An excellent book for doctors and medical professionals.

Padma Shri Prof. (Dr.) Mahipal Singh Sachdev, Director,
Centre for Sight, New Delhi, India

In today's scenario, medical education and medical practice are in a state of flux and rapid churning due to regulatory upheaval, raised expectations and evolving educational modalities. It is equally perturbing for the seasoned medical practitioner to adapt to the changing scenario as it is for the young medicos taking their first baby steps in the profession. *'Entrepreneurship for Doctors: How to Build Your Own Successful Medical Practice?'* is an excellent treatise written by Dr. Suresh K. Pandey, which admirably fills the gap in our formal medical education and encourages the medical professional to apply his/her knowledge, skill sets and ethos in his/her daily practice for universal benefit. A must-read for anyone connected to the health care domain.

Padma Shri Prof. (Dr.) Jagat Ram, Director, PGIMER, Chandigarh, India

My congratulations to Dr. Suresh K Pandey for bringing out this excellent book *'Entrepreneurship for Doctors: How to Build Your Own Successful Medical Practice?'* This book addresses step by step journey of a doctor to become a doctorpreneur. I am sure the book will be immensely useful for medical professionals.

Prof. Dr. Thomas Neuhann, Munich, Germany

Being a competent and skilled medical professional is not an easy task. The journey of medical students to successful doctors takes years of hard work, sleep-deprived nights, dedication and compassionate care. *'Entrepreneurship for Doctors: How to Build Your Own Successful Medical Practice?'* is a timely written excellent treatise written by,
Dr. Suresh K. Pandey. This book explores and addresses most of the very important issues related to medical students, young doctors, and medical professionals. Carefully reading and evaluating these valuable experiences and advises for their own situation can spare young physicians some cumbersome - even painful - own experiences on their way to a successful own practice.

Dr. Amar Agarwal, Director, Dr. Agarwal Group of Eye Hospitals Chennai, India

'Entrepreneurship for Doctors: How to Build Your Own Successful Medical Practice?' is one of the best book for young doctors. This book reveals toolkit to become a successful medical entrepreneur. I am sure the book will be immensely useful for medical professionals. Dr. Suresh K Pandey deserves congratulations for bringing out this excellent book.

Mr. Richard B. Packard, MD, DO, FRCS, FRCOphth, FEBOS-CR, UK

Entrepreneurship for Doctors: How to Build Your Own Successful Medical Practice?' has been written by Dr. Suresh K Pandey to motivate medical students, doctors-in-training, and young doctors to do well when they enter private practice. The author has shared valuable practical tips including

setting up a practice, leadership roles within the practice and maintaining a work-life balance. I am sure this book will be very helpful for young doctors. I only wish that it had been available to me when
I started in private practice 40 years ago.

Dr Geoffrey Craig Tabin, Co-Director of the Himalayan Cataract Project, Stanford, University, Stanford, California, USA

Entrepreneurship for Doctors: How to Build Your Own Successful Medical Practice?' is one of the most timely book written by
Dr. Suresh K. Pandey. Dr. Pandey shared several pearls of wisdom for entrepreneurship in medicine and tips manage the medical practice during the COVID-19 challenging time.

About the Author

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http://secretsofsuccessfuldoctors.com

Dr. Suresh K. Pandey is an author, world-renowned eye surgeon and Director of the SuVi Eye Hospital & Lasik Laser Centre, Kota, Rajasthan, India. He is a member of the prestigious International Intraocular Implant Club (IIIC). He was the past vice president of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) Kota and the past president of the Kota Division Ophthalmological Society (KDOS), Kota. Dr. Pandey completed his ophthalmology residency from the prestigious Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education & Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh and pursued an anterior segment fellowship in USA and Australia. He has also performed Live Surgeries at various national and international conferences and has received several awards including Achievement Award (American Academy of Ophthalmology), Best-of-Show Video Award, Best Poster Award, Best-Paper-of-the-Session Award, etc. at the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO), American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery (ASCRS), Asia Pacific Association of Cataract and Refractive Surgeons (APACRS), European Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgeons (ESCRS) International Conferences and was awarded a Gold Medal by Indian Intraocular Implant and Refractive Surgery Society. His two books- 'Secrets of Successful Doctors: A Complete Guide Fulfilling Medical Career', and 'A Hippocratic Odyssey: Lessons from a Doctor Couple on Life in Medicine, Challenges, and Doctor preneurship' are continued to be popular among medical professionals. Dr. Pandey can be reached at suresh.pandey@gmail.com

Photo Gallery

Figure-1:- Figure-1:- Freedom-fighter and renowned eye surgeon Dr. Kamta Prasad Pandey (grandfather of Dr. Suresh K. Pandey) with Dr. P.D. Giridhar (chief eye surgeon) and other eye surgeons at Kishan Lal Jalan Eye Hospital, Bhiwani (Haryana, India), 1937.

Figure-2:- Dr. Vidushi Sharma receiving her MD (Ophthalmology) degree by the then health minister during the convocation held at AIIMS, New Delhi Campus.

Figure-3:-Figure-3:- Dr. Suresh K. Pandey receiving an award at the European Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery (ESCRS) Conference at Vienna, Austria.

Figure-4:- Dr. Suresh K. Pandey receiving an award at the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery (ASCRS) Conference at San Diego, USA.

Figure-5:- Dr. Suresh K. Pandey receiving the Best Video Award at the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery (ASCRS) Conference at Boston, USA.

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Figure-7:- Dr. Suresh K. Pandey and co-authors receiving the Best of Show Video Award at the Annual Conference of the American Academy of Ophthalmology at Chicago, USA.

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Figure-9:- Dr. Suresh K. Pandey, Prof. David J. Apple and Dr. Liliana Werner after receiving the Video Award during the European Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery (ESCRS) Conference at Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Figure-10:- Dr. Suresh K. Pandey receiving the Video Award during the Asia Pacific Association of Cataract and Refractive Surgeons (APACRS) Conference at Shanghai, China.

Figure-11:- Dr. Suresh K. Pandey and co-authors receiving the Best of Show Award at the Annual Conference of the American

Academy of Ophthalmology at New Orleans, USA.

Figure-12:- Dr. Vidushi Sharma and Dr. Suresh K. Pandey receiving the Gold Medal during the Intraocular Implant and Refractive Society, India (IIRSI) Conference held at Chennai, India.

Figure-13:- Dr. Suresh K. Pandey receiving the Gold Medal from the Governor and Health Minister of Tamil Nadu during the Intraocular Implant and Refractive Society, India (IIRSI) Conference at Chennai, India.

Figure-14:- Release of video atlas ‘State-of-Art in Eye Surgery’ written by Dr. Vidushi Sharma and Dr. Suresh K. Pandey during the Intraocular Implant and Refractive Society, India (IIRSI) Conference, Chennai, India.

Figure-15:- Dr. Suresh K. Pandey performing live cataract surgery at the Video Cataracta International Ophthalmology Conference held at Milan, Italy.

Figure-16:- Dr. Suresh K. Pandey receiving an award during the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Conference held at Karachi, Pakistan.

Figure-17:- Dr. Vidushi Sharma and Dr. Suresh K. Pandey were awarded for their remarkable work to eliminate blindness by Rajasthan Home Minister and District Collector, Kota, India.

Dainik Bhaskar
Dr Suresh K Pandey was felicitated in the Doctors of Rajasthan Luminaries event held on 22nd of July 2018, by Shri Kali Charan Saraf, Honourable Minister for Health, Government of Rajasthan.

Figure-18:- Dr. Suresh K. Pandey receiving the 'Health Luminaries Award' by Health Minister of Rajasthan.

Figure-19:- Chief Minister of Rajasthan (Smt. Vasundhra Raje Scindia) unveiling Dr Vidushi Sharma's book Meri Kitab Meri Dost at Jaipur.

Figure-20:- Dr. Suresh K. Pandey receiving the Time of India Doctor's Award by the Kota District Collector.

Figure-21:- Dr. Suresh K. Pandey receiving the Doctor's Day Award by Health Minister of Rajasthan (Shri Kali Charan Saraf) at Jaipur.

Figure-22:- Dr. Vidushi and Dr. Suresh K. Pandey with Dr. Clair Schmidt (USA) and Dr. Roman Graemiger (Switzerland). Both doctors visited SuVi Eye Institute & Lasik Laser Centre, Kota, India, for a two-week observership.

Figure-23:- Dr Vidushi Sharma was nominated as 'Women Leaders in Healthcare' and her professional journey and achievements were featured by the renowned magazine Medgate Today.

Figure-24:- Dr. Suresh K. Pandey was nominated as 'Legends of Healthcare' and his professional journey and achievements were featured by the renowned magazine Medicare Insight.

Figure-25:- Dr. Suresh K. Pandey receiving the ‘AIOS International Heroes of India Award’ during the All India Ophthalmological Society (AIOS) Conference held at Coimbatore.

Figure-26:- Dr. Vidushi Sharma, Ishita Pandey, Dr. Suresh K. Pandey with film actor Shri Shekhar Suman at Mumbai during the program '*Success Stories – Zameen se Falak Tak*'. The interview and success story of Dr. Suresh & Dr. Vidushi of SuVi Eye Hospital, Kota was was broadcasted on National News Channel Zee Business on March 12, 2017.

Figure-27:- Dr. Vidushi and Dr. Suresh K. Pandey presenting motivational lecture and interacting with coaching students of Kota.

Figure 28. Dr. Suresh K. Pandey with Sir Harold Ridley (inventor of the IOL) during the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery Conference in Seattle, Washington, USA in 1999.

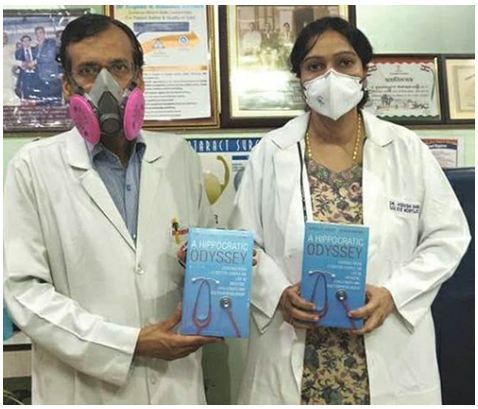

Figure-29:- Dr. Suresh K. Pandey and Dr. Vidushi with their newly published book: A Hippocratic Odyssey: Lessons from a Doctor Couple on Life in Medicine, Challenges and Doctorpreneurship. This book became # 1 best seller on Amazon (Patient and Physician Category).

Figure-30:- Prof. Amod Gupta (Director, AEC, PGIMER, Chandigarh), Dr. Jyotirmay Biswas (Chief, Uveitis Dept. Sankara Nethralaya Chennai), inaugurated "Wall of Pioneers in Ophthalmology" at SuVi Eye Hospital campus, Kota on Sept. 5, 2014. Left to Right: Dr. Suresh K. Pandey, Prof. Amod Gupta, Dr. Jyotirmay Biswas.

Figure-31:- Loksabha speaker honorable Sh. Om Birla presenting the 'Dainik Bhaskar Eminence Award' to Dr. Vidushi Sharma and

Dr. Suresh K. Pandey during the award ceremony organized on September 11, 2019.

Figure-32:- Dr. Suresh K. Pandey was felicitated by Allen Career Institute, Kota by Sh. Brajesh Maheshwari and their team during the Mega Health Checkup Camp held on April 18, 2019.

Entrepreneurship for DOCTORS

'Entrepreneurship for Doctors: How to Build Your Own Successful Medical Practice' is an ultimate guide to help you start and build your own successful medical practice. Divided into seven parts, the 42 chapters of this book elaborate on diverse topics like Creating an Action Plan, Managing Finances, Establishing Goals, Handling Insurance, Licensing, Recruiting Staff, Enhancing Patient Flow & Satisfaction, Minimizing Medical Errors, Building A Brand, Strategies for Managing Practice during COVID-19 and so much more!

Dr. Suresh K. Pandey is a world-renowned eye surgeon, author, and founder of SuVi Eye Hospital & Lasik Laser Center in Kota, Rajasthan. He graduated from NSCB Medical College, Jabalpur, MP, and completed his ophthalmology residency from prestigious PGIMER, Chandigarh, and pursued his fellowship from the Medical University of South Carolina, Storm Eye Institute, Charleston, SC, USA, and Sydney Eye Hospital, Sydney, Australia. His books *'Secrets of Successful Doctors'* and *'A Hippocratic Odyssey: Lessons from A Doctor Couple on Life in Medicine, Challenges, and Doctorpreneurship'* continue to be bestsellers. Dr. Pandey can be reached at suresh.pandey@gmail.com

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